MARJORIE'S BUSY DAYS

CAROLYN WELLS

MARJORIE'S BUSY DAYS

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

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"She fed the gold-fish, . . . she tried amusements of various sorts, but none seemed to interest her" (p. 144)

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BY

CAROLYN WELLS

AUTHOR OF
THE "PATTY" BOOKS

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MARJORIE'S BUSY DAYS

CHAPTER I

A JOLLY GOOD GAME

"WHAT do you say, King, railroad smash-up or shipwreck?"

"I say shipwreck, with an *awfully* desert island."

"I say shipwreck, too," said Kitty, "but I don't want to swim ashore."

"All right," agreed Marjorie, "shipwreck, then. I'll get the cocoanuts."

"Me, too," chimed in Rosy Posy. "Me tumble in the wet water, too!"

The speakers in this somewhat enigmatical conversation were the four Maynard children, and they were deciding on their morning's occupation. It was a gorgeous day in early September. The air, without being too cool, was just crisp enough

to make one feel energetic, though indeed no special atmospheric conditions were required to make the four Maynards feel energetic. That was their normal state, and if they were specially gay and lively this morning, it was not because of the brisk, breezy day, but because they were reunited after their summer's separation.

Though they had many friends among the neighboring children, the Maynards were a congenial quartette, and had equally good times playing by themselves or with others. Their home occupied a whole block in the prettiest residence part of Rockwell, and the big square house sat in the midst of about seven acres of lawn and garden.

There were many fine old trees, grassy paths, and informal flower-beds, and here the children were allowed to do whatever they chose, but outside the place, without permission, they must not go.

There was a playground, a tennis court, and a fountain, but better than these they liked the corner full of fruit trees, called "the orchard," and another corner, where grapes grew on trellises, called "the vineyard." The barn and its sur-

roundings, too, often proved attractive, for the Maynards' idea of playing were by no means confined to quiet or decorous games.

The house itself was surrounded by broad verandas, and on the southern one of these, in the morning sunshine, the four held conclave.

Kingdon, the eldest, was the only boy, and oftener than not his will was law. But this was usually because he had such splendid ideas about games and how to play them, that his sisters gladly fell in with his plans.

But Marjorie was not far behind her brother in ingenuity, and when they all set to work, or rather, set to play, the games often became very elaborate and exciting. "Shipwreck" was always a favorite, because it could develop in so many ways. Once they were shipwrecked no rescue was possible, unless help appeared from some unexpected quarter. It might be a neighbor's child coming to see them, or it might be a servant, or one of their own parents, but really rescued they must be by actual outsiders. Unless, indeed, they could build a raft and save themselves, but this they had never accomplished.

The desert island was selected, and this time

they chose a certain grassy knoll under an immense old maple tree.

Marjorie disappeared in the direction of the kitchen, and, after a time, came back with a small basket, apparently well-filled.

With this she scampered away to the "desert island," and soon returned, swinging the empty basket. Tossing this into the house, she announced that she was ready.

Then the four went to the big, double, wooden swing, and got in.

Kitty carried her doll, Arabella, from which she was seldom separated, and Rosy Posy hugged her big white Teddy Bear, who was named Boffin and who accompanied the baby on all expeditions.

The swing, to-day, was an ocean steamer.

"Have your tickets ready!" called out Kingdon, as his passengers swarmed up the gangplank, which he had thoughtfully laid from the ground to the low step of the swing.

Soon they were all on board, the gangplank drawn in, and the ship started.

At first all went smoothly. The swing swayed gently back and forth, and the passengers admired the beautiful scenery on either side. The

Captain had never crossed an ocean, and the nearest he had come to it had been a sail up the Hudson and a trip to Coney Island. His local color, therefore, was a bit mixed, but his passengers were none the wiser, or if they were, they didn't care.

"On the right, we see West Point!" the Captain shouted, pointing to their own house. "That's where the soldiers come from. The noble soldiers who fight for the land of the free and the home of the brave."

"Are you a soldier, sir?" asked Marjorie.

"Yes, madam; I am a veteran of the Civil War. But as there's no fighting to do now, I run this steamer."

"A fine ship it is," observed Kitty.

"It is that! No finer craft sails the waves than this."

"What is that mountain in the distance?" asked Marjorie, shading her eyes with her hand as she looked across the street.

"That's a—a peak of the Rockies, ma'am. And now we are passing the famous statue of 'Liberty Enlightening the World.'"

As the statue to which Kingdon pointed was

really Mrs. Maynard, who had come out on the veranda, and stood with her hand high against a post, the children shouted with laughter.

But this was quickly suppressed, as part of the fun of making-believe was to keep grave about it.

"Is your daughter ill, madam?" asked Marjorie of Kitty, whose doll hung over her arm in a dejected way.

"No, indeed!" cried Kitty, righting poor Arabella. "She is as well as anything. Only she's a little afraid of the ocean. It seems to be getting rougher."

It did seem so. The swing was not only going more rapidly, but was joggling from side to side.

"Don't be alarmed, ladies," said the gallant Captain; "there's no danger, I assure you."

"I'm not afraid of the sea," said Marjorie, "as much as I am of that fearful wild bear. Will he bite?"

"No," said Kingdon, looking at Rosy Posy. "That's his trainer who is holding him. He's a wonderful man with wild beasts. He's—he's Buffalo Bill. Speak up, Rosy Posy; you're Buf-

falo Bill, and that's a bear you're taking home to your show."

"Ess," said Rosamond, who was somewhat versed in make-believe plays, "I'se Buffaro Bill; an' 'is is my big, big bear."

"Will he bite?" asked Kitty, shrinking away in fear, and protecting Arabella with one arm.

"Ess! He bites awful!" Rosy Posy's eyes opened wide as she exploited her Bear's ferocity, and Boffin made mad dashes at Arabella, who duly shrieked with fear.

But now the ship began to pitch and toss fearfully. The Captain stood up in his excitement, but that only seemed to make the motion worse.

"Is there danger?" cried Marjorie, in tragic tones, as she gripped the belt of King's Norfolk jacket. "Give me this life-preserver; I don't see any other."

"They are under the seats!" shouted the Captain, who was now greatly excited. "I cannot deceive you! We are in great danger! We may strike a rock any minute! Put on life-preservers, all of you. They are under the seats."

The other three scrambled for imaginary life-

preservers, and vigorously put them on, when, with a terrific yell, Kingdon cried out:

"We have struck! We're on a rock! The ship is settling; we must all be drowned. We are lost! Launch the boats!"

This was a signal for shrieks and wails from the others, and in a minute it was pandemonium. The four screamed and groaned, the swing shook violently, and then came almost to a standstill.

Kingdon fell out with a bounce and lay prone on the ground. Marjorie sprang out, and as she reached the ground, struck out like a swimmer in the water.

Kitty daintily stepped out, remarking: "This is a fine life-preserver. I can stand straight up in the water."

Baby Rosamond bundled out backward, dropping Boffin as she did so.

"The bear, the bear!" screamed Kingdon, and swimming a few strokes along the soft, green grass, he grabbed the bear and waved him aloft.

"What can we do!" stammered Marjorie, panting for breath. "I've swum till I'm exhausted. Must I drown!" With a wail, she turned on

her eyes on the grass, and closing her eyes, prepared to sink beneath the waves.

"Do not despair," urged Kingdon, as he grasped her arm. "Perhaps we can find a plank or a raft. Or perhaps we can yet swim ashore."

"How many survivors are we?" asked Marjorie, sitting up in the water and looking about.

"Four," responded Kitty; "but I won't swim. It makes my dress all greeny, and stubs my shoes out."

Kitty was the only Maynard who was finicky about her clothes. It called forth much derision from her elder brother and sister, but she stood firm. She would play their plays, until it came to "swimming" across grass and earth, and there she rebelled.

"All right," said Kingdon, good-naturedly, "you needn't. There's a raft," pointing to what had been the gangplank. "Cannot you and your infant daughter manage to get ashore on that? This other lady is an expert swimmer, and I think she can reach land, while Buffalo Bill will, of course, save himself."

"Me save myself!" exclaimed Rosy Posy, glee-

fully. She had no objections to swimming on land, and throwing her fat self down flat, kicked vigorously, and assisted Boffin to swim by her side.

Kitty and Arabella arranged themselves on the raft, which Kitty propelled by a series of hitches. The shipwrecked sufferers thus made their way toward the desert island. There were several narrow escapes from drowning, but they generously assisted each other, and once when Kitty fell off her raft, the noble Captain offered to take Arabella on his own broad and stalwart back.

Buffalo Bill frequently forgot she was in the tossing ocean, and walked upright on her own fat legs.

But King said she was only "treading water," so that was all right.

At last they sighted land, and by a mighty effort, and much encouraging of one another, they managed to reach the shore of the island. Exhausted, Marjorie threw herself on the beach, and the half-drowned Captain also dragged himself up on dry land. Kitty skilfully brought her raft ashore, and stepped out, exclaiming: "Saved! But to what a fate!"

This was one of their favorite lines, and Marjorie weakly opened her eyes to respond:

"Methinks I shall not see to-morrow's sun!"

"Hist!" whispered Kingdon, "say no word, lady. There may be cannibals here!"

"Tannibals!" cried Buffalo Bill. "I 'ike Tannibals. Where is zey?"

Somewhat revived, Kingdon began to look round the desert island to see what its nature might be.

"We have escaped one terrible death!" he declared, "only to meet another. We must starve! This is a desert island exactly in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. No steamers pass here; no sailing vessels or ferryboats or,—or anything!"

"Oh! What shall we do?" moaned Kitty, clasping her hands in despair. "My precious Arabella! Already she is begging for food."

"We must consider," said Marjorie, sitting up, and looking about her. "If there is nothing else, we must kill the bear and eat him."

"No, no!" screamed Rosy Posy. "No, no eat my Boffin Bear."

"I will explore," said Kingdon. "Come, Buffalo Bill, we are the men of this party, we will

go all over the island and see what may be found in the way of food. Perhaps we will find cocoanuts."

"Ess," said Buffalo Bill, slipping her little hand in her brother's, "an' we'll take Boffin, so he won't get all killded."

"And while you're gone," said Marjorie, "we will dry our dripping garments and mend them."

"Yes," said Kitty, "with needles and thread out of my bag. I brought a big bag of all sorts of things, like Robinson Crusoe."

"That wasn't Robinson Crusoe," said King, "it was Mrs. Swiss Robinson."

"Oh, so it was! Well, it doesn't matter, I brought the bag, anyway."

The two brave men went away, and returned in a surprisingly short time with a surprising amount of food.

"These are cocoanuts," announced Kingdon, as he displayed four oranges. "I had to climb the tall palm trees to reach them. But no hardships or dangers are too great to assist fair ladies."

The fair ladies expressed great delight at the gallant Captain's deed, and asked Buffalo Bill what she had secured.

"Edds," said Rosy Posy, triumphantly, and, sure enough, in her tiny skirt, which she held gathered up before her, were three eggs and a cracker.

The eggs were hard-boiled, and were promptly appropriated by the three elder victims of the shipwreck, while the cracker fell to the share of Buffalo Bill, who was not yet of an age to eat hard-boiled eggs.

"I, too, will make search!" cried Marjorie. "Methinks there may yet be food which you overlooked."

As Marjorie had brought the food to the desert island only an hour before, it was not impossible that she might find some more, so they let her go to make search. She returned with a paper bag of crackers and another of pears.

"These are bread fruit," she announced, showing the crackers; "and these are wild pears. This is indeed a fruitful island, and we're lucky to be wrecked on such a good one."

"Lucky, indeed!" agreed the Captain. "Why, when I discovered those eggs on a rocky ledge, I knew at once they were gulls' eggs."

"And how fortunate that they're boiled," said Kitty. "I can't bear raw eggs."

The shipwrecked sufferers then spread out their food, and sat down to a pleasant meal, for the Maynard children had convenient appetites, and could eat at almost any hour of the day.

CHAPTER II

AN EXASPERATING GUEST

"Aren't hard-boiled eggs the very best things to eat in all the world?" said Marjorie, as she looked lovingly at the golden sphere she had just extracted from its ivory setting.

"They're awful good," agreed King, "but I like oranges better."

"Me eat lollunge," piped up Rosy Posy. "Buffaro Bill would 'ike a lollunge."

"So you shall, Baby. Brother'll fix one for you."

And the shipwrecked Captain carefully prepared an orange, and gave it bit by bit into the eager, rosy fingers.

"Of all things in the world," said Kitty, "I like chocolate creams best."

"Oh, so do I, if I'm not hungry!" said Marjorie. "I think I like different things at different times."

"Well, it doesn't matter much what you like now," said King, as he gave the last section of orange to Rosy Posy, "for everything is all eaten up. Where'd you get those eggs, Mops? We never hardly have them except on picnics."

"I saw them in the pantry. Ellen had them for a salad or something. So I just took them, and told her she could boil some more."

"You're a good one, Mopsy," said her brother, looking at her in evident admiration. "The servants never get mad at you. Now if I had hooked those eggs, Ellen would have blown me up sky-high."

"Oh, I just smiled at her," said Marjorie, "and then it was all right. Now, what are we going to do next?"

"Hark!" said Kingdon, who was again the shipwrecked mariner. "I hear a distant sound as of fierce wild beasts growling and roaring."

"My child, my child!" shrieked Kitty, snatching up Arabella. "She will be torn by dreadful lions and tigers!"

"We must protect ourselves," declared Marjorie. "Captain, can't you build a barricade? They always do that in books."

"Ay, ay, ma'am. But also we must hoist a flag, a signal of distress. For should a ship come by, they might stop and rescue us."

"But we have no flag. What can we use for one?"

"Give me your daughter's petticoat," said the Captain to Kitty.

"Not so!" said Kitty, who was fond of dramatic phrases. "Arabella's petticoat is spandy clean, and I won't have it used to make a flag."

"I'll give you a flag," said Marjorie. "Take my hair-ribbon." She began to pull off her red ribbon, but Kingdon stopped her.

"No," he said, "that won't do. We're not playing Pirates. It must be a white flag. It's for a signal of distress."

Marjorie thought a moment. There really seemed to be no white flag available.

"All right!" she cried, in a moment. "I'll give you a piece of my petticoat. It's an old one, and the ruffle is torn anyhow."

In a flash, impetuous Marjorie had torn a good-sized bit out of her little white petticoat, and the Captain fastened it to a long branch he had broken from the maple tree.

This he managed, with the aid of some stones, to fasten in an upright position, and then they sat down to watch for a passing sail.

"Buffaro Bill so s'eepy," announced that small person, and, with fat old Boffin for a pillow, Rosy Posy calmly dropped off into a morning nap.

But the others suffered various dreadful vicissitudes. They were attacked by wild beasts, which, though entirely imaginary, required almost as much killing as if they had been real.

Kitty shot or lassoed a great many, but she declined to engage in the hand-to-hand encounters with tigers and wolves, such as Marjorie and Kingdon undertook, for fear she'd be thrown down on the ground. And, indeed, her fears were well founded, for the valiant fighters were often thrown by their fierce adversaries, and rolled over and over, only to pick themselves up and renew the fray.

More exciting still was an attack from the natives of the island. They were horrible savages, with tomahawks, and they approached with blood-curdling yells.

Needless to say that, after a fearful battle, the natives were all slain or put to rout, and the con-

querors, exhausted but triumphant, sat round their camp-fire and boasted of their valorous deeds.

As noontime drew near, the settlers on the island began to grow hungry again, and, strange to say, the imaginary birds they shot and ate were not entirely satisfying.

Buffalo Bill, too, waked up, and demanded a jink of water.

But none could leave the island and brave the perils of the boundless ocean, unless in a rescuing ship.

For a long time they waited. They waved their white flag, and they even shouted for help.

But the "island" was at some distance from the house or street and none came to rescue them.

At last, they saw a huge, white-covered wagon slowly moving along the back drive.

"A sail! A sail!" cried the Captain. "What, ho! Help! Help!"

The other shipwrecked ones joined the cry, and soon the wagon drew a little nearer, and then stopped.

"Help! Help!" cried the children in chorus.

It was the butcher's wagon, and they knew it

well, but this season there was a new driver who didn't know the Maynard children.

"What's the matther?" he cried, jumping from his seat, and running across the grass to the quartette.

"We're shipwrecked!" cried Marjorie. "We can't get home. Oh, save us from a cruel fate! Carry us back to our far-away fireside!"

"Help!" cried Kitty, faintly. "My child is ill, and I can no longer survive!"

Dramatic Kitty sank in a heap on the ground, and the butcher's boy was more bewildered than ever.

"Save me!" cried Rosy Posy, toddling straight to him, and putting up her arms. "Save Buffaro Bill first,—me an' Boffin."

This was more intelligible, and the butcher's boy picked up the smiling child, and with a few long strides reached his cart, and deposited her therein.

"Me next! Me next!" screamed Marjorie. "I'm fainting, too!" With a thud, she fell in a heap beside Kitty.

"The saints presarve us!" exclaimed the frightened Irishman. "Whativer is the matther wid these childher? Is it pizened ye are?"

"No, only starving," said Marjorie, but her faint voice was belied by the merry twinkle in her eyes, which she couldn't suppress at the sight of the man's consternation.

"Aha! It's shammin' ye are! I see now."

"It's a game," explained Kingdon. "We're shipwrecked on a desert island, and you're a passing captain of a small sailing vessel. Will you take us aboard?"

"Shure, sir," said the other, his face aglow with Irish wit and intelligence. "I persave yer manin'. 'Deed I will resky ye, but how will ye get through the deep wathers to me ship forninst?"

"You wade over, and carry this lady," said King, pointing to Kitty, "and the rest of us will swim."

"Thot's a foine plan; come along, miss;" and in a moment Kitty was swung up to the brave rescuer's shoulder, while King and Midget were already "swimming" across the grass to the rescue ship.

All clambered into the wagon, and the butcher drove them in triumph to the back door. Here they jumped out, and, after thanking their kind rescuer, they scampered into the house.

"Such a fun!" said Rosy Posy, as her mother

bathed her heated little face. "Us was all shipperecked, an' I was Buffaro Bill, an' Boffin was my big wild bear!"

"You two are sights!" said Mrs. Maynard, laughing as she looked at the muddied, grass-stained, and torn condition of Kingdon and Marjorie. "I'm glad you had your play-clothes on, but I don't see why you always have to have such rough-and-tumble plays."

"'Cause we're a rough-and-tumble pair, Mothery," said King; "look at Kitty there! she kept herself almost spick and span."

"Well, I'm glad I have all sorts of children," said Mrs. Maynard. "Go and get into clean clothes, and be ready for luncheon promptly on time. I'm expecting Miss Larkin."

"Larky! Oh!" groaned Kingdon. "I say, Mothery, can't we—us children, I mean—have lunch in the playroom?" He had sidled up to his mother and was caressing her cheek with his far-from-clean little hands.

"No," said Mrs. Maynard, smiling as she kissed the brown fingers, "no, my boy, I want all my olive-branches at my table to-day. So, run along now and get civilized."

"Come on, Mops," said Kingdon, in a despairing tone, and, with their arms about each other, the two dawdled away.

Kitty had already gone to Nurse to be freshened up. Kitty loved company, and was always ready to put on her best manners.

But King and Midget had so much talking to do, and so many plans to make, that they disliked the restraint that company necessarily put upon their own conversation.

"I do detest old Larky," said the boy, as they went away.

"I don't mind her so much," said Marjorie, "except when she asks me questions."

"She's always doing that."

"Yes, I know it. But I promised Mother I'd be extra good to-day, and try to talk politely to her. Of course, I can do it if I try."

"So can I," said King, with an air of pride in his own powers. "All right, Mops, let's be 'specially 'stremely good and treat Miss Larkin just lovely."

Nearly an hour later the four shipwrecked unfortunates, now transformed into clean, well-dressed civilians, were grouped in the library to await Miss Larkin's arrival.

The lady was an old friend of Mrs. Maynard's, and though by no means elderly, was yet far from being as young as she tried to look and act.

She came tripping in, and after greeting her hostess effusively, she turned to the children.

"My, my!" she said. "What a group of little dears! How you have grown,—every one of you. Kingdon, my dear boy, would you like to kiss me?"

The request was far from acceptable to King, but the simper that accompanied it so repelled him that he almost forgot his determination to be very cordial to the unwelcome guest. But Midge gave him a warning pinch on his arm, and with an unintelligible murmur of consent, he put up his cheek for the lady's salute.

"Oh, what a dear boy!" she gurgled. "I really think I shall have to take you home with me! And, now, here's Marjorie. How are you, my dear? Do you go to school now? And what are you learning?"

Miss Larkin's questions always irritated Marjorie, but she answered politely, and then stepped aside in Kitty's favor.

"Sweet little Katharine," said the visitor.

"You are really an angel child. With your golden hair and blue eyes, you're a perfect cherub; isn't she, Mrs. Maynard?"

"She's a dear little girl," said her mother, smiling, "but not always angelic. Here's our baby, our Rosamond."

"No, I'se Buffaro Bill!" declared Rosy Posy, assuming a valiant attitude, quite out of keeping with her smiling baby face and chubby body.

"Oh, what delicious children! Dear Mrs. Maynard, how good of you to let me come to see them."

As Miss Larkin always invited herself, this speech was literally true, but as she and Mrs. Maynard had been schoolmates long ago, the latter felt it her duty to give her friend such pleasure as she could.

At the luncheon table, Miss Larkin kept up a running fire of questions.

This, she seemed to think, was the only way to entertain children.

"Do you like to read?" she asked of Marjorie.

"Yes, indeed," said Midget, politely.

"And what books do you like best?"

"Fairy stories," said Marjorie, promptly.

"Oh, tut, tut!" and Miss Larkin shook a play-

ful finger. "You should like history. Shouldn't she, now?" she asked, appealing to Kingdon.

"We like history, too," said Kingdon. "At least, we like it some; but we both like fairy stories better."

"Ah, well, children will be children. Do you like summer or winter best?"

This was a poser. It had never occurred to Marjorie to think which she liked best.

"I like them both alike," she said, truthfully.

"Oh, come now; children should have some mind of their own! Little Miss Kitty, I'm sure you know whether you like summer or winter best."

Kitty considered.

"I like winter best for Christmas, and summer for Fourth of July," she said at last, with the air of one settling a weighty matter.

But Miss Larkin really cared nothing to know about these things; it was only her idea of making herself entertaining to her young audience.

"And you, Baby Rosamond," she went on, "what do you like best in all the world?"

"Boffin," was the ready reply, "an' Buffaro Bill, 'cause I'm it."

They all laughed at this, for in the Maynard

family Rosy Posy's high estimation of herself was well known.

Although it seemed as if it never would, the luncheon at last came to an end.

Mrs. Maynard told the children they might be excused, and she and Miss Larkin would chat by themselves.

Decorously enough, the four left the room, but once outside the house, King gave a wild whoop of joy and turned a double somersault.

Midget threw herself down on a veranda-seat, but with a beaming face, she said:

"Well, we behaved all right, anyway; but I was 'most afraid I'd be saucy to her one time. It's *such* a temptation, when people talk like that."

"She talked all the time," said Kitty. "I don't see when she ate anything."

"She didn't," said King. "I suppose she'd rather talk than eat. She's not a bit like us."

"No," said Marjorie, emphatically, "she's not a bit like us!"

CHAPTER III

PICNIC PLANS

One entire day out of each month Mr. Maynard devoted to the entertainment of his children.

This was a long-established custom, and the children looked forward eagerly to what they called an Ourday.

The day chosen was always a Saturday, and usually the first Saturday of the month, though this was subject to the convenience of the elders.

The children were allowed to choose in turn what the entertainment should be, and if possible their wishes were complied with.

As there had been so much bustle and confusion consequent upon their return from the summer vacation, the September "Ourday" did not occur until the second Saturday.

It was Marjorie's turn to choose the sport, for, as she had been away at Grandma Sherwood's all summer, she had missed three Ourdays.

So one morning, early in the week, the matter was discussed at the breakfast table.

"What shall it be, Midget?" asked her father. "A balloon trip, or an Arctic expedition?"

Marjorie considered.

"I want something outdoorsy," she said, at last, "and I think I'd like a picnic best. A real picnic in the woods, with lunch-baskets, and a fire, and roasted potatoes."

"That sounds all right to me," said Mr. Maynard; "do you want a lot of people, or just ourselves?"

It was at the children's pleasure on Ourdays to invite their young friends or to have only the family, as they chose. Sometimes, even, Mrs. Maynard did not go with them, and Mr. Maynard took his young brood off for a ramble in the woods, or a day at the seashore or in the city. He often declared that but for this plan he would never feel really acquainted with his own children.

"I don't want a lot of people," said Marjorie, decidedly; "but suppose we each invite one. That makes a good-sized picnic."

As it was Marjorie's Ourday, her word was law, and the others gladly agreed.

"I'll ask Dick Fulton," said Kingdon. "I haven't seen much of him since I came home."

"And I'll ask Gladys Fulton, of course," said Midget. As Gladys was her most intimate friend in Rockwell, no one was surprised at this.

"I'll ask Dorothy Adams," said Kitty; but Rosy Posy announced: "I won't ask nobody but Boffin. He's the nicest person I know, an' him an' me can walk with Daddy."

"Next, where shall the picnic be?" went on Mr. Maynard.

"I don't know whether I like Pike's Woods best, or the Mill Race," said Marjorie, uncertainly.

"Oh, choose Pike's Woods, Mops," put in Kingdon. "It's lovely there, now, and it's a lot better place to build a fire and all that."

"All right, Father; I choose Pike's Woods. But it's too far to walk."

"Of course it is, Mopsy. We'll have a big wagon that will hold us all. You may invite your friends, and I'll invite a comrade of my own. Will you go, Mrs. Maynard?"

"I will, with pleasure. I adore picnics, and this bids fair to be a delightful one. May I assist you in planning the feast?"

"Indeed you may," said Midget, smiling at her mother. "But we can choose, can't we?"

"Of course, choose ahead."

"Ice cream," said Marjorie, promptly.

"Little lemon tarts," said Kitty.

"Candy," said Rosy Posy.

"Cold chicken," said Kingdon.

"That's a fine bill of fare," said Mr. Maynard, "but I'll add sandwiches and lemonade as my suggestions, and anything we've omitted, I'm sure will get into the baskets somehow."

"Oh, won't it be lovely!" exclaimed Marjorie. "I haven't been on a picnic with our own family for so long. We had picnics at Grandma's, but nothing is as much fun as an Ourday."

"Let's take the camera," said Kingdon, "and get some snapshots."

"Yes, and let's take fishlines, and fish in the brook," said Kitty.

"All right, chickabiddies; we'll have a roomy wagon to travel in, so take whatever you like. And now I must be off. Little Mother, you'll make a list to-day, won't you, of such things as I am to get for this frolic?"

"Candy," repeated Rosy Posy; "don't fordet that."

As the baby was not allowed much candy, she always chose it for her Ourday treat.

Mr. Maynard went away to his business, and the others remained at the breakfast table, talking over the coming pleasure.

"We'll have a great time!" said Kingdon. "We'll make father play Indians and shipwreck and everything."

"Don't make me play Indians!" exclaimed his mother, in mock dismay.

"No, indeedy! You couldn't be an Indian. You're too white-folksy. But you can be a Captive Princess."

"Yes!" cried Marjorie; "in chains and shut up in a dungeon."

"No, no," screamed Rosy Posy; "my muvver not be shutted up in dunjin!"

"No, she shan't, Baby," said her brother, comfortingly; "and, anyway, Mops, Indians don't put people in dungeons, you're thinking of Mediævals."

"Well, I don't care," said Midget, happily; "we'll have a lovely time, whatever we play.

I'm going over to ask Gladys now. May I, Mother?"

"Yes, Midget, run along. Tell Mrs. Fulton that Father and I are going, and that we'd be glad to take Gladys and Dick."

Away skipped Marjorie, hatless and coatless, for it was a warm day, and Gladys lived only across the street.

"It's so nice to have you back again, Mopsy," said Gladys, after the invitation had been given and accepted. "I was awful lonesome for you all summer."

"I missed you, too; but I did have a lovely time. Oh, Gladys, I wish you could see my tree-house at Grandma's! Breezy Inn, its name is, and we had *such* fun in it."

"Why don't you have one here? Won't your father make one for you?"

"I don't know. Yes, I suppose he would. But it wouldn't seem the same. It just *belongs* at Grandma's. And, anyway, I'm busy all the time here. There's so much to do. We play a lot, you know. And then I have my practising every day, and, oh dear, week after next school will begin. I just hate school, don't you, Gladys?"

"No, I love it; you know I do."

"Well, I don't. I don't mind the lessons, but I hate to sit cooped up at a desk all day. I wish they'd have schools out of doors."

"Yes, I'd like that, too. I wonder if we can sit together, this year, Mops?"

"Oh, I hope so. Let's ask Miss Lawrence that, the very first thing. Why, I'd die if I had to sit with any one but you."

"So would I. But I'm sure Miss Lawrence will let us be together."

Gladys was a pretty little girl, though not at all like Marjorie. She was about the same age, but smaller, and with light hair and blue eyes. She was more sedate than Midget, and more quiet in her ways, but she had the same love of fun and mischief, and more than once the two girls had been separated in the schoolroom because of the pranks they concocted when together.

Miss Lawrence, their teacher, was a gentle and long-suffering lady, and she loved both little girls, but she was sometimes at her wits' end to know how to tame their rollicking spirits.

Gladys was as pleased as Marjorie at the prospect of the picnic. Often the Maynard children

had their Ourdays without inviting other guests, but when outsiders were invited they always remembered the happy occasions.

All through the week preparations went on, and on Friday Ellen, the cook, gave up most of the day to the making of cakes and tarts and jellies. The next morning she was to get up early to fry the chicken and prepare the devilled eggs.

Mr. Maynard brought home candies and fruit from the city, and a huge can of ice-cream was ordered from the caterer.

The start was to be made at nine o'clock Saturday morning, for it was a long drive, and everybody wanted a long day in the woods.

Friday evening was fair, with a beautiful sunset, and everything boded well for beautiful weather the next day.

Rosy Posy, after her bread-and-milk supper, went happily off to bed, and dropped to sleep while telling her beloved Boffin of the fun to come. The other children dined with their parents, and the conversation was exclusively on the one great subject.

"I don't think it *could* rain; do you, Father?"

said Kitty, looking over her shoulder, at the fading sunset tints.

"I think it *could*, my dear, but I don't think it will. All signs point to fair weather, and I truly believe we'll have a perfect Ourday and a jolly good time."

"We always do," said Midge, happily. "I wonder why all fathers don't have Ourdays with their children. Gladys' father never gets home till seven o'clock, and she has to go to bed at eight, so she hardly sees him at all, except Sundays, and of course they can't play on Sundays."

"They must meet as strangers," said Mr. Maynard. "I think our plan is better. I like to feel chummy with my own family, and the only way to do it is to keep acquainted with each other. I wish I could have a whole day with you every week, instead of only every month."

"Can't you, Father?" said Kitty, wistfully.

"No, daughter. I have too much business to attend to, to allow me a holiday every week. But perhaps some day I can manage it. Are you taking a hammock to-morrow, King?"

"Yes, sir. I thought Mother might like an

afternoon nap, and Rosy Posy always goes to sleep in the morning."

"Thoughtful boy. Take plenty of rope, but you needn't bother to take trees to swing it from."

"No, we'll take the chance of finding some there."

"Yes, doubtless somebody will have left them from the last picnic. Your young friends are going?"

"Yes," said Marjorie. "King and I asked the two Fultons, and Kitty asked Dorothy Adams. With all of us, and Nurse Nannie, that makes just ten."

"And the driver of the wagon makes eleven," said Mr. Maynard. "I suppose we've enough rations for such an army?"

"Yes, indeed," said Mrs. Maynard, smiling. "Enough for twenty, I think, but it's well to be on the safe side."

The children went to bed rather earlier than usual, in order to be up bright and early for the picnic.

Their play-clothes, which were invariably of blue and white striped seersucker, were laid out

in readiness, and they fell asleep wishing it were already morning.

But when the morning did come!

Marjorie wakened first, and before she opened her eyes she heard an ominous sound that sent a thrill of dismay to her heart.

She sprang out of bed, and ran to the window.

Yes, it was not only raining, it was simply *pouring*.

One of those steady, determined storms that show no sign of speedy clearing. The sky was dark, leaden gray, and the rain came down in what seemed to be a thick, solid volume of water.

"Oh!" said Marjorie, with a groan of disappointment from her very heart.

"Kitty," she said, softly, wondering if her sister were awake.

The girls had two beds on either side of a large room, and Midget tiptoed across the floor, as she spoke. Kitty opened her eyes sleepily. "What is it, Midget? Time to get up? Oh, it's picnic day!"

As Kitty became broad awake, she smiled and gaily hopped out of bed.

"What's the matter?" she said, in alarm, for Marjorie's face was anything but smiling.

For answer, Midget pointed out of the window, toward which Kitty turned for the first time.

"Oh!" said she, dropping back on the edge of the bed.

And, indeed, there seemed to be nothing else to say. Both girls were so overwhelmed with disappointment that they could only look at each other with despondent faces.

Silently they began to draw on their stockings and shoes, and though determined they wouldn't do anything so babyish as to cry, yet it was no easy matter to keep the tears back.

"Up yet, chickabiddies?" called Mr. Maynard's cheery voice through the closed door.

"Yes, sir," responded two doleful voices.

"Then skip along downstairs as soon as you're ready; it's a lovely day for our picnic."

Midge and Kitty looked at each other. This seemed a heartless jest indeed! And it wasn't a bit like their father to tease them when they were in trouble. And real trouble this surely was!

They heard Mr. Maynard tap at King's door, and call out some gay greeting to him, and then

they heard King splashing about, as if making his toilet in a great hurry. All this spurred the girls to dress more quickly, and it was not long before they were tying each other's hair-ribbons and buttoning each other's frocks.

Then they fairly ran downstairs, and, seeing Mr. Maynard standing by the dining-room window, they both threw themselves into his arms, crying out, "Oh, Father, isn't it *too* bad?"

"What?" asked Mr. Maynard, quizzically.

"Now, Daddy," said Midget, "don't tease. Our hearts are all broken because it's raining, and we can't have our picnic."

"Can't have our picnic!" exclaimed Mr. Maynard, in apparent excitement. "Can't have our picnic, indeed! Who says we can't?"

"I say so!" exclaimed Kingdon, who had just entered the room. "Nobody but ducks can have a picnic to-day."

"Oh, well," said Mr. Maynard, looking crestfallen, "if King says so that settles it. *I* think it's a beautiful picnic day, but far be it from me to obtrude my own opinions."

Just here Mrs. Maynard and Rosy Posy came in. They were both smiling, and though no one

expected the baby to take the disappointment very seriously, yet it did seem as if Mother might have been more sympathetic.

"I suppose we can eat the ice-cream in the house," said Marjorie, who was inclined to look on the bright side if she could possibly find one.

"That's the way to talk!" said her father, approvingly. "Now you try, Kingdon, to meet the situation as it should be met."

"I will, sir. I'm just as disappointed as I can be, but I suppose there's no use crying over spilt milk,—I mean spilt raindrops."

"That's good philosophy, my boy. Now, Kitty, what have you to say by way of cheering us all up?"

"I can't see much fun in a day like this. But I hope we can have the picnic on the next Ourday."

"That's a brave, cheerful spirit. Now, my sad and disheartened crew, take your seats at the breakfast table, and listen to your foolishly optimistic old father."

The children half-heartedly took their places, but seemed to have no thought of eating breakfast.

"Wowly-wow-wow!" said Mr. Maynard, looking around the table. "*What* a set of blue faces!

Would it brighten you up any if I should prophesy that at dinner-time to-night you will all say it has been the best Ourday we've ever had, and that you're glad it rained?"

"Oh, Father!" said Marjorie, in a tone of wondering reproach, while Kitty and King looked blankly incredulous, and Mrs. Maynard smiled mysteriously.

CHAPTER IV

AN OURDAY

It was impossible to resist the infection of Mr. Maynard's gay good-nature, and by the time breakfast was over, the children were in their usual merry mood. Though an occasional glance out of the window brought a shadow to one face or another, it was quickly dispelled by the laughter and gaiety within.

Marjorie was perhaps the most disappointed of them all, for it was her day, and she had set her heart on the picnic in the woods. But she tried to make the best of it, remembering that, after all, father would be at home all day, and that was a treat of itself.

After breakfast, Mr. Maynard led the way to the living-room, followed by his half-hopeful brood. They all felt that something would be done to make up for their lost pleasure, but it didn't seem as if it could be anything very nice.

Mr. Maynard looked out of the front window in silence for a moment, then suddenly he turned and faced the children.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he said; "do any of you know the story of Mahomet and the mountain?"

"No, sir," was the answer of every one, and Marjorie's spirits sank. She liked to hear her father tell stories sometimes, but it was a tame entertainment to take the place of a picnic, and Mahomet didn't sound like an interesting subject, anyway.

Mr. Maynard's eyes twinkled.

"This is the story," he began; "sit down while I tell it to you."

With a little sigh Marjorie sat down on the sofa, and the others followed her example. Rosy Posy, hugging Boffin, scrambled up into a big armchair, and settled herself to listen.

"It is an old story," went on Mr. Maynard, "and the point of it is that if the mountain wouldn't come to Mahomet, Mahomet must needs go to the mountain. But to-day I propose to reverse the story, and since you four sad, forlorn-looking Mahomets can't go to the picnic, why,

then, the picnic must come to you. And here it is!"

As Mr. Maynard spoke—indeed he timed his words purposely—their own carriage drove up to the front door, and, flying to the window, Marjorie saw some children getting out of it. Though bundled up in raincoats and caps, she soon recognized Gladys and Dick Fulton and Dorothy Adams.

In a moment they all met in the hall, and the laughter and shouting effectually banished the last trace of disappointment from the young Maynards' faces.

"Did you come for the picnic?" said Marjorie to Gladys, in amazement.

"Yes; your father telephoned early this morning,—before breakfast,—and he said the picnic would be in the house instead of in the woods. And he sent the carriage for us all."

"Great! Isn't it?" said Dick Fulton, as he helped his sister off with her mackintosh. "I thought there'd be no picnic, but here we are."

"Here we are, indeed!" said Mr. Maynard, who was helping Dorothy Adams unwind an

entangling veil, "and everybody as dry as a bone."

"Yes," said Dorothy, "the storm is awful, but in your close carriage, and with all these wraps, I couldn't get wet."

"Oh, isn't it fun!" cried Kitty, as she threw her arms around her dear friend, Dorothy. "Are you to stay all day?"

"Yes, until six o'clock. Mr. Maynard says picnics always last until sundown."

Back they all trooped to the big living-room, which presented a cheerful aspect indeed. The rainy morning being chilly, an open fire in the ample fireplace threw out a cheerful blaze and warmth. Mrs. Maynard's pleasant face smiled brightly, as she welcomed each little guest, and afterward she excused herself, saying she had some household matters to attend to and that Mr. Maynard would take charge of the "picnic."

"First of all," said the host, as the children turned expectant faces toward him, "nobody is to say, 'What a pity it rained!' or anything like that. Indeed, you are not to look out at the storm at all, unless you say, 'How fortunate we are under cover!' or words to that effect."

"All right, sir," said Dick Fulton, "I agree. And I think a picnic in the house will be dead loads of fun."

"That's the way to talk," said Mr. Maynard, "and now the picnic will begin. The first part of it will be a nutting-party."

"Oho!" laughed Marjorie. "A nutting-party in the house is 'most too much! I don't see any trees;" and she looked around in mock dismay.

"Do you usually pick the nuts off of trees?" asked her father, quizzically. "You know you don't! You gather them after they have fallen. Now nuts have fallen all over this house, in every room, and all you have to do is to gather them. Each may have a basket, and see who can find the most. Scamper, now!"

While Mr. Maynard was talking, Sarah, the waitress, had come in, bringing seven pretty baskets of fancy wicker-ware. One was given to each child, and off they ran in quest of nuts.

"Every room, Father?" called back Marjorie, over her shoulder.

"Every room," he replied, "except the kitchen.

You must not go out there to bother cook. She has all she can attend to."

This sounded pleasant, so Marjorie went on, only pausing for one more question.

"What kind of nuts, Father?"

"Gather any kind you see, my child. There was such a strong wind last night, I daresay it blew down all sorts."

And truly that seemed to be the case. Shrieks of surprise and delight from the whole seven announced the discoveries they made.

They found peanuts, English walnuts, pecan nuts, hazelnuts, Brazil nuts, almonds, hickory nuts, black walnuts, and some of which they didn't know the names.

The nuts were hidden in all sorts of places. Stuffed down in the cushions of chairs and sofas, on mantels and brackets, under rugs and footstools, on window sills, on the floor, on the chandeliers, they seemed to be everywhere. All over the house the children scampered, filling their baskets as they went.

Sometimes two would make a dash for the same nut, and two bumped heads would ensue, but this was looked upon as part of the fun.

The older children gathered their nuts from the highest places, leaving the low places for the little ones to look into.

Rosy Posy found most of those on the floor, behind the lace curtains or portières, as she toddled about with her basket on one arm and Boffin in the other.

At last the whole house had been pretty thoroughly ransacked, and the nutting-party returned in triumph with loaded baskets.

"Did you look under the sofa pillows on the couch in this room?" said Mr. Maynard, gravely, and seven pairs of legs scampered for the couch.

Under its pillows they found three big *cocoanuts*, and Mr. Maynard declared that completed the hunt.

Meantime, the big, round table in the middle of the room had been cleared of its books and papers, and the children were directed to empty their baskets of nuts on the table, taking care that none should roll off the edge. The seven basketsful were tumbled out, and a goodly heap they made.

Then the seven sat round the table, and to each one was given a tiny pair of candy tongs, such as comes with the confectioner's boxes.

"This is a new game," explained Mr. Maynard, "and it's called Jacknuts. It is played just the same as Jackstraws. Each, in turn, must take nuts from the heap with the tongs. If you jar or jostle another nut than the one you're taking away, it is then the next player's turn."

Of course they all knew how to play Jackstraws, so they understood at once, but this was much more fun.

"The first ones are so easy, let's give Rosy Posy the first chance," said Dick Fulton, and Mr. Maynard, with a nod of approval at the boy, agreed to this plan. So Rosy Posy, her fat little hand grasping the tiny tongs, succeeded in getting nearly a dozen nuts into her basket.

As Dorothy Adams was not quite as old as Kitty, she took her turn next, and then all followed in accordance with their ages.

It was a fascinating game. Some of the little hazelnuts or the slender peanuts were easy to nip with the tongs, but the big English walnuts, or queer-shaped Madeira nuts were very difficult. Great delicacy of touch was necessary, and the children found the new game enthralling.

After her first turn Rosy Posy ran away from the game, and Mr. Maynard took her place.

"Oho, Father," laughed Kitty, "I thought you'd get them all, but you're no more successful at it than we are."

"No," said Mr. Maynard, looking with chagrin at his small heap of nuts, "my fingers are too old and stiff, I think."

"So are mine," said Marjorie, laughing.

"You're too fat, Dumpling," said her father. "Kitty's slim little claws seem to do the best work."

"I think it's a steady hand that counts," said Dick; "watch me now!"

With great care, and very slowly, he picked off several nuts that were daintily balanced on the other nuts, but at last he joggled one, and it was King's turn.

"I believe in going fast," said King, and like a whirlwind he picked off four nuts, one after the other. But his last one sent several others flying, and so left an easy chance for Gladys, who came next.

"There's a prize for this game," announced Mr. Maynard, after the table was entirely cleared, and

the nuts were again all in the seven baskets. "In fact there's a prize apiece, all round. And the prizes are nuts, of course. You may each have one."

"One nut!" cried Marjorie. "What a little prize!"

"Not so very little," said her father, smiling.

Then Sarah appeared with a plate of *doughnuts*, and everybody gladly took a prize. A glass of milk went with each of these nuts, and then the children clamored to play the game all over again.

"No, indeed!" said Mr. Maynard. "You can play that any day in the year, but just now we're having a picnic, and the picnic must proceed with its programme."

"All right!" cried Marjorie. "What comes next?"

"Crackers," said her father. "Bring them in, please, Sarah."

"Crackers!" exclaimed King. "I don't want any after that big doughnut."

"You must take one, though," said his father, "it's part of the programme."

Then Sarah came, and brought a big tray on

which were three nutcrackers, some nutpicks, and several bowls and plates.

"Take a cracker, King," said Mr. Maynard, and the boy promptly took the biggest nutcracker, ready to do the hardest work.

The girls took nutpicks and bowls, and Mr. Maynard and Dick Fulton took the other two nutcrackers, and then work began in earnest. But the work was really play, and they all enjoyed cracking and picking out the nuts, though what they were doing it for nobody knew. But with so many at it, it was soon over, and the result was several bowlsful of kernels. The shells were thrown into the fire, and Mr. Maynard directed that the seven empty baskets be set aside till later.

"We haven't cracked the cocoanuts yet," said Dick. "They're too big for these nutcrackers."

"So they are," said Mr. Maynard. "Well, I'll tell you what we'll do. We'll take them to the dining-room and continue our nut game out there."

So each carried a bowl of nuts, or a cocoanut, and all went to the dining-room.

There the extension-table was spread out full length, and contained a lot of things. On big

sheets of white paper were piles of sifted sugar. Large empty bowls there were, and big spoons, and plates and dishes filled with figs and dates, and oranges and all sorts of goodies.

"What's it all for?" said Marjorie. "It's too early for lunch, and too late for breakfast."

"It's the rest of the nut game," said Mr. Maynard. "I am Professor Nuttall, or Know-it-all; and I'm going to teach you children what I hope will be a valuable accomplishment. Do any of you like candy?"

Replies of "We do," and "Yes, sir," came so emphatically that Mr. Maynard seemed satisfied with the answers.

"Well, then, we'll make some candy that shall be just the best ever! How's that?"

"Fine!" "Glorious!" "Goody, goody!" "Great!" "Oh, Father!" and "Ah!" came loudly from six young throats, and Mrs. Maynard and Rosy Posy came to join the game.

Sarah came, too, bringing white aprons for everybody, boys and all, and then Nurse Nannie appeared, and marched them off, two by two, to wash their hands for the candy-making process.

CHAPTER V

A NOVEL PICNIC

But at last they were all ready to begin.

Mr. Maynard, in his position of teacher, insisted on absolute system and method, and everything was arranged with care and regularity.

"The first thing to learn in candy-making," he said, "is neatness; and the second, accuracy."

"Why, Father," cried Dorothy, "I didn't know you knew how to make candy!"

"I know more than you'd believe, to look at me. And now, if you four girls will each squeeze the juice of an orange into a cup, we'll begin."

Marjorie and Kitty and Gladys and Dorothy obeyed instructions exactly, and soon each was carefully breaking an egg, and still more carefully separating the white from the yolk.

Mrs. Maynard seemed to find plenty to do just waiting on the workers, and it was largely owing to her thoughtfulness that oranges and eggs and

cups and spoons appeared when needed, almost as if by magic.

Meantime the two boys were working rapidly and carefully, too. They grated cocoanut and chocolate; they cut up figs and seeded dates; they chopped nuts and raisins; and they received admiring compliments from Mrs. Maynard for the satisfactory results of their work.

"Oh, isn't it fun!" exclaimed Marjorie, as she and Gladys were taught to mould the creamy, white *fondant* they had made, into tiny balls. Some of these white balls the smaller girls pressed between two nut kernels, or into a split date; and others were to be made into chocolate creams. This last was a thrilling process, for it was not easy at first to drop the white ball into the hot black chocolate, and remove it daintily with a silver fork, being most careful the while not to leave untidy drippings.

Cocoanut balls were made, and nougat, which was cut into cubes, and lovely, flat peanut sugar cakes.

The boys did all these things quite as well as the girls, and all, except Rosy Posy, worked with a will and really accomplished wonders.

Each was allowed to eat five finished candies of any sort and at any time they chose, but they were on their honor not to eat more than five.

"Oh," sighed Marjorie, as she looked at the shining rows of goodies on plates and tins, "I'd like to eat a hundred!"

"You wouldn't want any luncheon, then," said her father. "And as it's now noon, and as our candies are all done, I suggest that you all scamper away to some place where soap and water grow wild, and return as soon as possible, all tidy and neat for our picnic luncheon."

"Lunch time!" cried Gladys, in surprise. "It can't be! Why, we've only been here a little while."

But it was half-past twelve, and for the first time that whole morning the children looked out of the windows.

"It's still raining," said King, "and I'm glad of it. We're having more fun than at an outdoor picnic, *I* think."

"So do I!" cried all the others, as they ran away upstairs.

Shortly after, seven very spick-and-span-looking children presented themselves in the lower hall. Curls had been brushed, hair-ribbons freshly tied,

and even Boffin had a new blue ribbon round his neck.

"Now for the real picnic!" cried Mr. Maynard, as he led the way into the living-room.

As Marjorie entered, she gave a shriek of delight, and turned to rush into her father's arms.

"Oh, Daddy!" she cried. "You do beat the Dutch! What a lovely picnic! It's a million times better than going to the woods!"

"Especially on a day like this," said her father.

The others, too, gave exclamations of joy, and indeed that was small wonder.

The whole room had *almost* been turned into a woodland glen.

On the floor were spread some old green muslin curtains that had once been used for private theatricals or something.

Round the walls stood all the palms and ferns and plants that belonged in other parts of the house, and these were enough to give quite an outdoorsy look to the place.

To add to this, great branches of leaves were thrust behind sofas or tables. Some leaves were green and some had already turned to autumn tints, so it was almost like a real wood.

Chairs and tables had been taken away, and to sit on, the children found some big logs of wood, like trunks of fallen trees, and some large, flat stones.

James, the coachman, and Thomas, the gardener, had been working at the room all the time the children were making candy, and even now they were peeping in at the windows to see the young people enjoying themselves.

In the middle of the room was what looked like a big, flat rock. As it was covered with an old, gray rubber waterproof, it was probably an artificial rock, but it answered its purpose. Real stones, twigs, leaves, and even clumps of moss were all about on the green floor cloth, and overhead were the children's birds, which had been brought down from the playroom, and which sang gaily in honor of the occasion.

"Isn't it wonderful?" said Dorothy Adams, a little awed at the transformation scene; "how did you do it, Mr. Maynard?"

"I told my children," he replied, "that since they couldn't go to the picnic the picnic should come to them, and here it is."

Rosy Posy discovered a pile of hay in a corner,

and plumped herself down upon it, still holding tightly her beloved Boffin.

Then James and Thomas came in carrying big, covered baskets.

"The picnic! The picnic!" cried Rosy Posy, to whom a picnic meant chiefly the feast thereof.

After the baskets were deposited on the ground near the flat rock, James and Thomas went away, and none of the servants remained but Nurse Nannie, who would have gone to the picnic in the wood, and who was needed to look after little Rosamond.

"Now, my boys," said Mr. Maynard, "we must wait on ourselves, you know; and on the ladies. This is a real picnic."

Very willingly the boys fell upon the baskets, and soon had their contents set out upon the big rocks.

Such shouts of delight as went up at sight of those contents!

And indeed it was fun!

No china dishes or linen napery, but wooden plates and Japanese paper napkins in true picnic style. Then while the girls set the viands in order, the boys mended the fire in the big fireplace, and put potatoes in to roast. Mrs. Maynard had

thoughtfully selected small potatoes, and so they were soon done, and with butter and pepper and salt they tasted exactly as roast potatoes do in the woods, and every one knows there is no better taste than that!

While the potatoes were roasting, too, the lemonade must be made. Mr. Maynard and Dick Fulton squeezed the lemons, while Kingdon volunteered to go down to the spring for water.

This made great fun, for they all knew he only went to the kitchen, but he returned with a pail of "cold spring water," and then Mrs. Maynard attended to the mixing of the lemonade.

The feast itself was found to include everything that had been asked for beforehand.

Cold chicken, devilled eggs, sandwiches, lemon tarts, all were there, besides lots of other good things.

They all pretended, of course, that they were really in the woods.

"How blue the sky is to-day," said Mr. Maynard, looking upward, as he sat on a log, with a sandwich in one hand and a glass of lemonade in the other.

As the ceiling was papered in a design of white

and gold, it required some imagination to follow his remark, but they were all equal to it.

"Yes," said Marjorie, gazing intently skyward; "it's a beeyootiful day. But I see a slight cloud, as if it *might* rain to-morrow."

"We need rain," said Mr. Maynard; "the country is drying up for the lack of it."

As it was still pouring steadily, this was very funny, and of course they all giggled.

Then King went on.

"The sun is so bright it hurts my eyes. I wish I had a pair of green glasses to protect them."

"Or a parasol," said Gladys. "I'm sorry I left mine at home."

"What are we going to do at the picnic this afternoon, Father?" asked Kitty.

"I thought we'd fly kites," said Mr. Maynard, "but there isn't a breath of air stirring, so we can't."

The wind was blowing a perfect gale, so this made them all laugh again, and Gladys said to Marjorie, "I do think your father is the *funniest* man!"

At last the more substantial part of the luncheon was over, and it was time for the ice cream.

The freezer was brought right into the picnic ground, and Kingdon and Dick were asked to dig the ice cream out with a big wooden spoon, just as they always did at picnics. The heaps of pink and white delight, on fresh pasteboard plates, were passed around, and were eaten by those surprising children with as much relish as if they hadn't just consumed several basketfuls of other things.

Then the candies were brought in, but, strange to say, nobody cared much for any just then.

So Mrs. Maynard had the seven pretty fancy baskets, that they had gathered nuts in, brought back, and each child was allowed to fill a basket with the pretty candies.

These were set away until the picnic was over, when they were to be taken home as souvenirs.

Luncheon over, Mr. Maynard decreed that the picnickers needn't do the cleaning away, as that couldn't be done by merely throwing away things as they did in the woods.

So Sarah came in to tidy up the room, and Mr. Maynard seated his whole party on the big logs and stones, while he told them stories.

The stories were well worth listening to, and though Rosy Posy fell asleep, the others listened breathlessly to the tales which were told in a truly dramatic fashion. But after an hour or so of this, Mr. Maynard suddenly declared that the picnic was becoming too quiet.

"I wanted you all to sit still for a while after your hearty luncheon," he said, "but now you need exercise. Shall we play 'Still Pond'?"

A howl of glee greeted this suggestion, for Still Pond in the house was usually a forbidden game.

As you probably know, it is like Blindman's Buff, only the ones who are not blinded may not move.

Marjorie was "It" first, and after being carefully blindfolded by her father, she stood still in the middle of the floor and counted ten very slowly. While she did this, the others placed themselves behind tables or chairs, or wherever they felt safe from the blindfolded pursuer.

"Ten!" cried Marjorie, at last. "Still Pond! No moving!"

This was a signal for perfect quiet; any one moving after that had to be "It" in turn.

No sound was heard, so Marjorie felt her way

cautiously about until she should catch some one. It was hard for the others not to laugh as she narrowly escaped touching Kingdon's head above the back of the sofa, and almost caught Kitty's foot as it swung from a table. But at last she caught her father, who was on the floor covered up with an afghan, and so Mr. Maynard was "It" in his turn.

It was a rollicking game, and a very exciting one, and, as often was the case, it soon merged into Blindman's Buff. This was even more romping and noisy, and soon the picnic sounded like Pandemonium let loose.

"Good!" cried Mr. Maynard, as he looked at the red, laughing faces, and moist, tumbled curls. "You look just like a lot of healthy, happy boys and girls should look, but that's enough of that. Now, we'll sit down in a circle, and play quiet games."

Again the group occupied the logs and stones, ottomans and sofa cushions if they preferred, and they played guessing games selected by each in turn.

When it was Mr. Maynard's turn, he said he would teach them the game of the Popular Picnic.

He began by telling them they must each in turn repeat what he himself should say.

Turning to Kingdon, he said, "To-day I have been to the Popular Picnic."

So Kingdon said to Dick, "To-day I have been to the Popular Picnic."

Then Dick said it to Marjorie, and Marjorie to Gladys, and so on all round the circle.

Then Mr. Maynard said, gravely: "To-day I have been to the Popular Picnic. Merry, madcap Mopsy Midget was there."

This was repeated all round, and then to the lingo Mr. Maynard added, "Kicking, kinky-legged Kingdon was there."

This, after the other, was not so easy, but they all repeated it.

Next came, "Dear, dainty, do-little Dorothy was there."

This made them laugh, but they said it safely all round.

Then, "Delightful, dangerous, Deadwood Dick was there."

They had to help each other this time, but not one of them would give up the game.

"Gay, gregarious, giggling Gladys was there."

Gladys was indeed giggling, but so were all the others. Still they were a determined lot, and each time round each one repeated all the sets of names, amid the laughing of the others.

"Kind-hearted, Kindergarten Kitty," was an easy one, but when the list wound up with "Rollicking Rufflecumtuffle Rosy Posy," the game ended in a gale of laughter.

But they remembered many of the funny phrases, and often called each other by them afterward.

"Now," said Mr. Maynard, "we'll play something less wearing on the intellect. This is called the motor-car game, and you must all sit in a row. Kingdon, you're the chauffeur, and when chauffeur is mentioned, you must make a 'chuff-chuff' sound like starting the machine. Dick, you're the tire, and when tire is said, you must make a fearful report like an explosion of a bursting tire. Dorothy, you're the number, and when number is mentioned, you must say six-three-nine-nine-seven."

"What am I, Father?" said impatient Kitty.

"Oh, you're the man that they run over, and you must groan and scream. Marjorie, you're

the speed limit, and you must cry, 'Whiz! Zip!! *Whizz!!!*' Gladys, you're the dust. All you have to do is to fly about and wave your arms and hands, and sneeze. Rosy Posy, baby, you're the horn. Whenever father says *horn*, you must say 'Toot, toot!' Will you?"

"Ess. Me play game booful, me an' Boffin; we say, 'Toot, toot!'"

"Now," went on Mr. Maynard, "I'll tell the story and when any of you are mentioned you must do your part. Then if I say automobile, you must all do your parts at once. Ready now: Well, this morning I started out for a ride and first thing I knew my tire burst."

A fearful "Plop!" from Dick startled them all, and then the game went on.

"I feared I was exceeding the speed-limit [much puffing and whizzing from Marjorie], and as I looked back through the dust [great cloud of dust represented by Gladys' pantomime] I saw I had run over a man!"

The awful groans and wails from Kitty were so realistic that Mr. Maynard himself shook with laughter.

"I sounded my horn——"

"Tooty-toot-toot!" said Rosy Posy, after being prompted by Kingdon.

"But as I was my own chauffeur"—here Kingdon's representation of a starting motor quite drowned the speaker's voice—"I hastened on before they could even get my number."

"Eight-six-eleven-nine," cried Dorothy, quite forgetting the numbers she had been told. But nobody minded it, for just then Mr. Maynard said, "And so I went home with my automobile."

At this everybody turned up at once, and the dust cloud flew about, and the man who was run over groaned fearfully, and tires burst one after another, and the horn tooted, until Mr. Maynard was really obliged to cry for mercy, and the game was at an end.

The afternoon, too, was nearly at an end, and so quickly had it flown that nobody could believe it was almost six o'clock!

But it was, and it was time for the picnic to break up, and for the little guests to go home. It had stopped raining, but was still dull and wet, so the raincoats were donned again, and, with their beautiful baskets of candies wrapped in

protecting tissue papers, Gladys and Dorothy and Dick clambered into Mr. Maynard's carriage and were driven to their homes.

"Good-bye!" they called, as they drove away. "Good-bye, all! We've had a *lovely* time!"

"Lovely? I should say so!" said Marjorie, who was clinging to her father's arm. "It's been the very best Ourday ever, and I'm *so* glad it rained!"

"My prophecy has come true!" declared Mr. Maynard, striking a dramatic attitude. "Only this morning I prognosticated you'd say that, and you——"

"And I didn't see how it could be possible," agreed Marjorie, wagging her head, wisely. "I know it. But you made it possible, you beautiful, dear, smart, clever, sweet father, you, and I've had just the elegantest time!"

"When it's my turn, I shall choose a picnic in the house," said Kitty.

"Not unless it's a rainy day," said her father. "I've enjoyed the day, too; but I can tell you it's no joke to get up this kind of a picnic. Why, I was telephoning and sending errands for two

hours before you kiddies were awake this morning."

"Dear Daddy," said Marjorie, caressing his hand in both her own, "you are *so* good to us; and I *do* hope it will rain next Curday!"

"So do I!" said all the others.

CHAPTER VI

THE FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL

At last schooldays began, and one Monday morning the three Maynards started off.

The first day of school was a great occasion, and much preparation had been made for it.

Mr. Maynard had brought each of the children a fine new box, well stocked with pencils, pens, and things of that sort. Kitty had a new slate, and Midget and King had new blankbooks.

Also, they were all in a state of clean starchiness, and the girls' pretty gingham dresses and King's wide white collar were immaculate.

Marjorie didn't look especially happy, but her mother said:

"Now, Mopsy, dear, don't go to school as if it were penance. Try to enjoy it, and think of the fun you'll have playing with the other girls at recess."

"I know, Mother; but recess is so short, and school is so long."

"Ho! Only till one o'clock," said Kingdon. "Then we can come home, have lunch, and then there's all the afternoon to play."

"Yes, for you," said Marjorie. "But I have to practise a whole hour, and that leaves almost no time at all, and there are so many things I want to do."

"Now, my little girl," said Mrs. Maynard, very seriously, "you must try to conquer that mood. You know you have to go to school, so why not make the best of it? You don't really dislike it as much as you think you do. So, cheer up, little daughter, and run along, determined to see the bright side, even of school."

"I will try, Mother," said Midget, smiling, as she received her good-bye kiss, "but I'll be glad when it's one o'clock."

"I wiss me could go to school," said Rosy Posy, wistfully; "me an' Boffin, we'd have fun in school."

"There it is," said Mrs. Maynard, laughing. "Little girls who can go to school don't want to go, and little girls who can't go do want to!"

"You'll go some day, Baby," said King, "but they won't let you take Boffin."

"Den I won't go!" declared Rosy Posy, decidedly.

The three walked down the path to the gate, and, soon after they reached the street, they were joined by several others, also schoolward bound.

Marjorie's spirits rose, as she chatted with the merry young people; and as they passed the Fulton house, and Dick and Gladys came out, Marjorie was so glad to see her friend that she was at once her own happy, merry little self again.

Miss Lawrence's room was one of the pleasantest in the big brick building. When Marjorie and Gladys presented themselves at her desk, and asked if they might sit together, the teacher hesitated. She wanted to grant the request of the little girls, but they had been in her class the year before, and she well knew their propensities for mischief.

"Oh, please, Miss Lawrence!" begged Marjorie; and, "Oh, do say yes!" pleaded Gladys.

It was hard to resist the little coaxers, and Miss Lawrence at last consented.

"But," she said, "you may sit at the same

desk only so long as you behave well. If you cut up naughty pranks, I shall separate you for the rest of the term."

"We won't!" "We will be good!" cried the two children, and they ran happily away to their desk.

Each desk was arranged for two occupants, and both Marjorie and Gladys enjoyed putting their things away neatly, and keeping them in good order. They never spilled ink, or kept their papers helter-skelter, and but for their mischievous ways, would have been model pupils indeed.

"Let's be real good all the term, Gladys," said Midget, who was still under the influence of her mother's parting words. "Let's try not to cut up tricks, or do anything bad."

"All right, Mopsy. But you mustn't make me laugh in school. It's when you begin to do funny things that I seem to follow on."

"Well, I won't. I'll be as good as a little white mouse. But if I'm a mouse, I'll nibble your things."

Down went Marjorie's curly head like a flash, and when it came up again, Gladys' new penholder was between her teeth, and the "mouse" was vigorously nibbling it.

"Stop that, Mops! I think you're real mean! That's my new penholder, and now you've spoiled it."

"So I have! Honest, Gladys, I didn't think the dents would show so. I was just playing mouse, you know. Here, I'll change, and give you mine. It's new, too."

"No, I won't take it."

"Yes, you will; you must. I'm awfully sorry I chewed yours."

Poor little Midget! She was always impulsively getting into mischief, but she was always sorry, and generously anxious to make amends.

So Gladys took Marjorie's penholder, and Mopsy had the nibbled one. She didn't like it a bit, for she liked to have her things in good order, but she said to Gladys:

"Perhaps it will make me remember to be good in school. Oh, s'pose I'd played mouse in school hours!"

"Keep still," said Gladys, "the bell has rung."

The morning passed pleasantly enough, for there were no lessons on the first day of school.

Books were distributed, and class records were made, and lessons given out for next day.

Marjorie was delighted with her new geography, which was a larger book than the one she had had the year before. Especially was she pleased with a large map which was called the "Water Hemisphere." On the opposite page was the "Land Hemisphere," and this was a division of the globe she had never seen before.

The Water Hemisphere pleased her best, and she at once began to play games with it.

Talking was, of course, forbidden, but motioning for Gladys to follow her example, she made a tiny paper boat, and then another, and several others. These she set afloat on the printed ocean of the Water Hemisphere. Gladys, delighted with the fun, quickly made some boats for herself, and arranged them on her own geography. Other pupils, seeing what was going on, followed the example, and soon nearly all the geographies in the room had little paper craft dotting their oceans.

Next, Marjorie made some little men and women to put in the boats. She had no scissors, but tore them roughly out of paper which she took from

her blankbook. Other leaves of this she obligingly passed around, until all the boats in the room were supplied with passengers.

Then Marjorie, still in her position of leader, tore out a semblance of a fish. It seemed to be a whale or shark, with wide-open jaws.

This awful creature came slowly up from the Antarctic Ocean, toward the ships full of people.

Suddenly a boat upset, the passengers fell out, and the whale made a dash for them.

This awful catastrophe was repeated in the other oceans, and, needless to say, in a moment the whole roomful of children were in peals of laughter.

Miss Lawrence looked up from her writing, and saw her class all giggling and shaking behind their geographies. Instinctively she glanced toward Marjorie, but that innocent damsel had swept all her boats and whales into her pocket, and was demurely studying her lessons.

Marjorie did not in the least mean to deceive Miss Lawrence, but when the children all laughed, she suddenly realized that she had been out of order, and so she quickly stopped her play, and resumed her task.

Observing the open geographies covered with scraps of paper, Miss Lawrence felt she must at least inquire into the matter, and, though the children did not want to "tell tales," it soon transpired that Marjorie Maynard had been ringleader in the game.

"Why did you do it, Marjorie?" asked Miss Lawrence, with a reproachful expression on her face. As she had meant no harm, Marjorie felt called upon to defend herself.

"Why, Miss Lawrence," she said, rising in her seat, "I didn't think everybody would do it, just because I did. And I didn't think much about it anyway. I s'pose that's the trouble. I *never* think! But I never had a jography before with such a big ocean map, and it was such a lovely place to sail boats, I just made a few. And then I just thought I'd put some people in the boats, and then it seemed as if such a big ocean ought to have fish in it. So I made a whale,—and I was going to make a lot of bluefish and shads and things, but a boat upset, and the whale came after the people, and then, first thing I knew, everybody was laughing! I didn't mean to do wrong."

Marjorie looked so genuinely distressed that

Miss Lawrence hadn't the heart to scold her. But she sighed as she thought of the days to come.

"No, Marjorie," she said, "I don't think you did mean to do wrong, but you ought to know better than to make paper toys to play with in school."

"But it isn't exactly a schoolday, Miss Lawrence."

"No; and for that very reason I shall not punish you this time. But remember, after this, that playing games of any sort is out of place in the schoolroom."

"Yes, ma'am," said Marjorie, and she sat down, feeling that she had been forgiven, and firmly resolved to try harder than ever to be good.

But half-suppressed chuckles now and then, in different parts of the schoolroom, proved to the watchful Miss Lawrence that some of the whales were still lashing about the paper oceans in quest of upturned boats.

The game so filled Marjorie's thoughts that she asked that Gladys and she might be allowed to stay in the schoolroom at recess and play it.

"There's surely no harm in playing games at

recess, is there, Miss Lawrence?" she asked, as she caressed her teacher's hand.

Miss Lawrence hesitated. "No," she said, at last; "I can't let you stay in the schoolroom. I'm sorry, dearies, and I hate to be always saying 'No,' but I feel sure your parents want you to run out in the fresh air at recess time, and they wouldn't like to have you stay indoors."

"Oh, dear," said Marjorie; "seems 'sif we can't have any fun!" Then her face brightened, and she added, "But mayn't we take our jographies out on the playground, and play out there?"

There was a rule against taking schoolbooks out of the classrooms, but Miss Lawrence so disliked to say 'No' again that she made a special dispensation, and said:

"Yes, do take your geographies out with you. But be very careful not to soil or tear them."

And so the two girls danced away, and all through the recess hour, boats upset and awful sharks swallowed shrieking victims. But, as might have been expected, most of the other children came flying back to the schoolroom for their

geographies, and again Miss Lawrence was in a quandary.

"I never saw a child like Marjorie Maynard," she confided to another teacher. "She's the dearest little girl, but she gets up such crazy schemes, and all the others follow in her footsteps."

So, after recess, Miss Lawrence had to make a rule that books could not be used as playthings, even at recess times.

For the rest of the morning, Marjorie was a model pupil.

She studied her lessons for the next day, and though Miss Lawrence glanced at her from time to time, she never saw anything amiss.

But when school was over at one o'clock, Marjorie drew a long breath and fairly flew for her hat.

"Good-bye, dearie," said Miss Lawrence, as Midge passed her when the long line filed out.

"Good-bye!" was the smiling response, and in two minutes more Mopsy was skipping and jumping across the playground.

"Hello, King!" she called. "Where's Kitty? Oh, here you are! Now we can all go home together. What shall we do this afternoon? I

want to do something jolly to take the taste of school out of my mouth."

"Come over to our house and play in the hay," said Dick Fulton.

"All right, we will. I'll have my practising done by three o'clock, and we'll come then."

A little later, and the three Maynards flew in at their own gate, and found a warm welcome and a specially good luncheon awaiting them.

"I got along pretty well, Mother," said Marjorie, as they all told their morning's experiences. "Only I couldn't help playing paper boats." She told the whole story, and Mrs. Maynard smiled as she said:

"Marjorie, you are incorrigible; but I fear you will only learn by experience——"

"What is incorrigible?" asked Marjorie.

"It's 'most too big a word for you to understand," said her mother, "but it means you must just keep on everlastingly trying to be good."

"I will," said Mops, heartily, and then she turned her attention to the chicken pie before her.

CHAPTER VII

THE JINKS CLUB

SATURDAY was hailed with delight by the four Maynards.

Now that school had begun, a whole playday meant more than it did in vacation time, when all days were playdays.

It was a glorious September day, and as it was an early autumn, many leaves had fallen and lay thick upon the ground.

"I know what to do," said Marjorie, as directly after breakfast they put on hats and coats for outdoor play of some sort. "Let's make leaf-houses."

"All right," said Kingdon, "and let's telephone for the others."

"The others" always meant the two Fultons and Kitty's friend, Dorothy Adams.

Rosy Posy was too little to have a special chum, so Boffin was her companion.

Leaf-houses was a favorite game with all of them, and soon the three guests came skipping through the gate.

The leaves had been raked from the lawn, but down in the orchard they were on the ground like a thick carpet. The orchard had many maples and elms, as well as fruit trees, so there were leaves of all sorts.

"Isn't it fun to scuffle through 'em!" said Marjorie, as she led the way, shuffling along, almost knee-deep in the brown, dry leaves.

"More fun to roll!" cried Dick, tumbling down and floundering about.

Down went Rosy Posy in imitation of Dick's performance, and then they all fell into the leaves, and burrowed about like rabbits.

Presently Marjorie's head emerged like a bright-eyed turtle poking out from its shell, and shaking the dead leaves out of her curls, she said: "Come on, let's make houses. King, won't you and Dick get some rakes?"

The boys flew off to the toolhouse, and came back with several rakes, both wood and iron ones.

"Here's all we can find," said King. "Some of us can rake, and some can build things."

They all set to work with a will, and soon two houses were in process of construction.

These houses were, of course, merely a ground plan, and long, low piles of leaves divided the rooms. Openings in these partitions made doors, and the furniture was also formed of heaps of leaves. A long heap was a sofa, and a smaller heap a chair, while a round, flat heap was a table.

King, Gladys, and Dorothy were one family, while Dick, Marjorie, and Kitty were the other.

Rosy Posy was supposed to be an orphan child, who lived with one family or the other in turn, as suited her somewhat fickle fancy.

In each family the children represented father, mother, and daughter, and they were pleasantly neighborly, or at odds with each other, as occasion required.

To-day the spirit of adventure was strong in Marjorie, and she decreed they should play robbers.

This was always a good game, so they all agreed.

"First, King's family must be robbed," said Midget; "and then, after you catch us, you can rob us."

The burglaries were thus amicably planned, and Kingdon and his family, lying on leaf-couches, fell into a deep, but somewhat noisy slumber. Indeed, their snoring was loud enough to frighten away most robbers.

Rosy Posy didn't count in this game, so she was allowed to wander in and out of either house.

When the Kingdon family were *very* sound asleep, the Dick family crept softly in through the open doors, and endeavored to steal certain valuable silver from the sideboard. This silver was admirably represented by chips and sticks.

Dick and Marjorie had secured their booty and were carefully sneaking away when King awoke, and with a howl pounced upon Kitty, who was still industriously stealing silver.

This, of course, was part of the game, and Dick and Midget wrung their hands in despair as they saw their daughter forcibly detained by the master of the house.

Then Gladys and Dorothy were awakened by the noise, and added their frightened screams to the general hullaballoo.

Kitty was bound hand and foot in the very dining-room where the silver had been, and King

went valiantly out to hunt the other marauders. Then the game was for King and his family to try to catch Dick and Midget, or for Kitty's parents to release her from her bondage.

At last, as King and Gladys were both engaged in chasing Dick, Marjorie found an opportunity to free Kitty, and then the game began again, the other way round.

At last they tired of hostilities and agreed to rebuild their houses, combining them in one, and calling it a big hotel.

"Or a clubhouse," said King, who had recently visited one with his father, and had been much impressed.

"Clubhouses are grand," he said. "They have porches, and swimming-pools, and gyms, and dining-rooms, and everything!"

So the architecture was changed, and soon a fine clubhouse was outlined in leafy relief.

"Then if this is a clubhouse, we're a club," said Kitty, thoughtfully.

"Oh, let's be a club!" exclaimed Marjorie. "Clubs are lots of fun. I mean children's clubs —not big ones like father's."

"What do clubs do?" asked Dorothy, who had

a wholesome fear of some of the Maynards' escapades.

"Why, we can do anything we want to, if we're a club," said Dick. "I think it would be fun. What shall we do?"

"Let's cut up jinks," said Marjorie, who was especially energetic that day.

"And let's call it the Jinks Club," suggested Gladys.

"Goody! Goody!!" cried Midge. "Just the thing, Glad! And then we can cut up any jinks we want to,—as long as they're good jinks," she added, thoughtfully.

"What do you mean by that?" demanded King.

"Well, you see, last summer at Grandma's, she told me there were good jinks and bad jinks. She meant just plain fun, or real mischief. And I promised I'd cut up only good jinks."

"All right," said Dick, "I'll agree to that. We just want to have fun, you know; not get into mischief."

So, as they were all agreed on this, the Jinks Club was started.

"I'll be president," volunteered Marjorie.

"Does somebody have to be president?" asked Gladys. "And does the president have all the say?"

"Let's all be presidents," said King. "I know clubs usually have only one; but who cares? We'll be different."

"All right," said Marjorie. "And, anyway, we won't need a secretary and treasurer and such things, so we'll each be president. I think that will be more fun, too."

"Me be president," announced Rosy Posy, "an' Boffin be a president, too."

"Yes," said King, smiling at his baby sister, "you and Boff and all the rest of us. Then, you see, we can all make rules, if we want to."

"We don't need many rules," said Dick. "Just a few about meetings and things. When shall we meet?"

"Every day after school, and every Saturday," said Marjorie, who was of a whole-souled nature.

"Oh, no!" said Gladys. "I know Mother won't let me come as often as that."

"Don't let's have special times," said King. "Just whenever we're all together, we'll have a meeting."

This was agreed to, but Marjorie didn't seem quite satisfied.

"It doesn't seem like a real club," she said, "unless we have dues and badges and things like that."

"Huh, dues!" said King. "I want to spend my money for other things besides dues to an old club! What would we do with the dues, anyway?"

"Oh, save them up in the treasury," said Marjorie, "until we had enough to go to the circus, or something nice like that."

This sounded attractive, and King reconsidered.

"Well, I don't mind," he said. "But I won't give all my money. I have fifty cents a week. I'll give ten."

"So will I," said Dick, and the others all agreed to do the same.

Of course, Rosy Posy didn't count, so this made sixty cents a week, and furthermore it necessitated a treasurer.

"Let's each be treasurer," said King, remembering how well his presidential plan had succeeded.

"No," said Midget; "that's silly. I'll be

treasurer, and I'll keep all the money safely, until we want to use it for something nice."

"Yes, let's do that," said Gladys. "Mopsy's awfully careful about such things, and she'll keep the money better than any of us. I haven't mine here now; I'll bring it over this afternoon."

"I don't care much about the money part," said King. "I want to cut up jinks. When do we begin?"

"Right now!" said Marjorie, jumping up. "The first jink is to bury King in leaves!"

The rest caught the idea, and in a moment the luckless Kingdon was on his back and held down by Dick, while the girls piled leaves all over him. They left his face uncovered, so he could breathe, but they heaped leaves over the rest of him, and packed them down firmly, so he couldn't move.

When he was thoroughly buried, Marjorie said: "Now we'll hide. Don't start to hunt till you count fifty, King."

"One, two, three," began the boy, and the others flew off in all directions.

All except Rosy Posy. She remained, and, patting King's cheek with her fat little hand, said: "Me'll take care of you, Budder. Don't ky."

"All right, Baby,—thirty-six, thirty-seven, thirty-eight,—take that leaf out of my eye! thirty-nine, forty—thank you, Posy."

A minute more, and King shouted "Fifty! Coming, ready or not!" and, shaking himself out of his leaf-heap, he ran in search of the others. Rosy Posy, used to being thus unceremoniously left, tumbled herself and Boffin into the demolished leaf-heap, and played there contentedly.

King hunted for some minutes without finding anybody. Then a voice right over his head said, "Oo-ee!"

He looked up quickly, but saw only a tree which had not yet shed its foliage, and who was up there he could not guess from the voice.

If he guessed wrong, he must be "It" over again, so he peered cautiously up into the branches.

"Who are you?" he called.

"Oo-ee!" said a voice again, but this time it sounded different.

"Here goes, then," said King, and he swung himself up into the lower branches, keeping sharp watch lest his quarry elude him, and slip down the other side.

But once fairly up in the tree, he found the

whole five there awaiting him, and as they all dropped quickly to the ground, and ran for "home" he had to jump and follow, to get there first himself.

The jolly game of Hide-and-Seek lasted the rest of the morning, and then the little guests went home, promising to come back in the afternoon and bring their contributions to the treasury of the "Jinks Club."

The afternoon meeting found the Maynards in spandy-clean clothes, sitting on the side veranda.

"Mother says we're not to romp this afternoon," explained Marjorie. "She says we may swing, or play in the hammock, or on the lawn, but we can't go to the orchard."

"All right," said good-natured Dick; "and, say, I've been thinking over our club, and I think we ought to be more like a real club. Why not have regular meetings, and have programmes and things?"

"Oh!" groaned King. "Speak pieces, do you mean?"

"No; not that. We get enough of speaking pieces, Friday afternoons, in school. I mean,—oh, pshaw, I don't know what I mean!"

"You mean read minutes, and things like that," suggested Marjorie, helpfully.

"Yes," said Dick, eagerly, "that's just what I mean."

"All right," said Marjorie, "I'll be secretary, and write them."

"Now, look here, Midge," said Kingdon, "you can't be everything! You want to be president and treasurer and secretary and all. Perhaps you'd like to be all the members!"

"Fiddlesticks, King!" said Marjorie; "nobody else seems to want to be anything. Now, I'll tell you what, let's have six things to be,—officers, you know, and then we'll each be one."

"That's a good way," said Gladys. "You be treasurer, Marjorie, 'cause you're so good at arithmetic, and you can take care of our money. Dick can be secretary, 'cause he writes so well."

"I will," said Dick, "if King will be president. He's best for that,—and then, Gladys, you can be vice-president."

"What can Dorothy and I be?" asked Kitty, who didn't see many offices left.

Marjorie considered. "You can be the com-

mittee," she said, at last. "They always have a committee to decide things."

This sounded pleasing, and now all were satisfied.

"Well, if I'm treasurer," said Marjorie, "I'll take up the collection now."

Promptly five dimes were handed to her, and, adding one of her own, she put them all into a little knitted silk purse she had brought for the purpose.

"Is there any further business to come before this meeting?" asked the President, rolling out his words with great dignity, as befitted his position.

"No, sir," said Kitty; "I'm the committee to decide things, and I say there isn't any more business. So what do we do next?"

"I'll tell you!" cried Midget, in a sudden burst of inspiration; "let's go down to Mr. Simmons' and all have ice-cream with our money in the treasury. I'll ask Mother if we may."

"But, Mopsy!" cried King, in surprise. "I thought we were to save that to go to the circus."

"Oh, pshaw! Father'll take us to the circus. Or we can save next week's money for that. But,

truly, I feel like cutting up jinks, and we can't play in the orchard, and it would be lots of fun to go for ice-cream, all together."

"It would be fun," said Dick; and then they all agreed to Marjorie's plan.

Mrs. Maynard listened with amusement to the story, and then said they might go if they would behave like little ladies and gentlemen and return home inside of an hour.

Off they started, and a more decorous-looking crowd than the Jinks Club one would not wish to see!

Mr. Simmons' Ice-Cream Garden was a most attractive place.

It was a small grove, by the side of a small stream, and the tables were in a sort of pavilion that overlooked the water.

The children were welcomed by the good-natured old proprietor, who had served his ice-cream to their parents when they were children.

"And what kind will you have?" asked Mr. Simmons, after they were seated around a table.

This required thought, but each finally chose a favorite mixture, and soon they were enjoying

the pink or white pyramids that were brought them.

"I do think the Jinks Club is lovely," said Kitty, as she gazed out over the water and contentedly ate her ice-cream.

"So do I," said Dorothy, who always agreed with her adored chum, but was, moreover, happy on her own account.

"I shall write all this up in the minutes!" declared Dick. "And when shall we have our next meeting?"

"Next Saturday," said Kitty. "I'm the committee, and I decide things."

"So do I," said Dorothy, and they all agreed to meet the next Saturday morning.

CHAPTER VIII

SPELLING TROUBLES

"WHAT *is* the matter, Midge?" said her father. "You sigh as if you'd lost your last friend."

The family were in the pleasant living-room one evening, just after dinner.

All, that is, except Rosy Posy, who had gone to bed long ago. Kingdon was reading, and Kitty was idly playing with the kitten, while Marjorie, her head bent over a book on the table, was abstractedly moving her lips as if talking to herself.

"Oh, Father! it's this horrid old spelling lesson. I just *can't* learn it, and that all there is about it!"

"Can't learn to spell? Bring me your book, and let me have a look at it."

Very willingly Marjorie flew to her father's side, and, big girl though she was, perched herself on his knee while she showed him the page.

"Just look! There's 'deleble' spelled with an e, and 'indelible' with an i! Why can't they spell them alike?"

"I think myself they might as well have done so," said Mr. Maynard, "but, since they didn't, we'll have to learn them as they are. Where is your lesson?"

"All that page. And they're fearfully hard words. And words I'll never use anyway. Why would I want to use 'harassed' and 'daguerreotype' and 'macaroni' and such words as those?"

Mr. Maynard smiled at the troubled little face.

"You may not want to use them, dearie, but it is part of your education to learn to spell them. Come, now, I'll help you, and we'll soon put them through. Let's pick out the very hardest one first."

"All right; 'daguerreotype' is the hardest."

"Oh, pshaw, no! That's one of the very easiest. Just remember that it was a Frenchman named Daguerre who invented the process; then you only have to add o and 'type,' and there you are!"

"Why, that *is* easy! I'll never forget that. 'Macaroni' is a hard one, though."

"Why?"

"Oh, because I always put two c's or two r's or two n's in it."

"Ho, that makes it easy, then. Just remember that there isn't a double letter in it, and then spell it just as it sounds. Why, macaroni is so long and thin that there isn't room for a double letter in it."

"Oh, Father, you make it so easy. Of course I'll remember that, now."

Down the long list they went, and Mr. Maynard, with some little quip or quibble, made each word of special interest, and so fixed it in Marjorie's memory. At the end of a half-hour she was perfect in the lesson, and had thoroughly enjoyed the learning of it.

"I wish you'd help me every night," she said, wistfully. "All this week, anyway. For there's to be a spelling-match on Friday, between our class and Miss Bates' class, and we want to win. But I'm such a bad speller, nobody wants to choose me on their side."

"They don't, don't they? Well, I rather think we'll change all that. You and I will attack Mr. Speller every evening, and see if we can't vanquish him."

"I think we can," said Marjorie, her eyes sparkling. "For it's only some few of those catchy words that I can't seem to learn. But after you help me they all seem easy."

So every night that week Midge and her father had a spelling-class of their own, and fine work was accomplished.

The spelling-match was to be on Friday, and Thursday night they were to have a grand review of all the lessons. Marjorie brought home her schoolbooks on Thursday, and left them in the house while she went out to play. But when she came in to get ready for dinner, her mother was dressing to go out.

"Where are you going, Mother?" said Marjorie, looking admiringly at her mother's pretty gown.

"We're going to Mrs. Martin's to dinner, dearie. She invited us over the telephone this morning. There's a very nice dinner prepared for you children, and you must have a good time by yourselves, and not be lonesome. Go to bed promptly at nine o'clock, as we shall be out late."

"Is father going, too?" cried Marjorie, aghast.

"Yes, of course. You may fasten my glove, Midget, dear."

"But I want father to help me with my spelling."

"I thought about that, Mops," said her father, coming into the room. "And I'm sorry I have to be away to-night. But I'll tell you what we'll do. When is this great spelling-match,—to-morrow?"

"Yes, to-morrow afternoon."

"Well, you study by yourself this evening, and learn all you can. Then skip to bed a bit earlier than usual, and then hop up early to-morrow morning. You and I will have an early breakfast, at about seven o'clock. Then from half-past seven to half-past eight I'll drill you in that old speller till you can spell the cover right off it."

"All right," said Marjorie. "It's really just as well for me to study alone to-night, and then you can help me a lot to-morrow morning. But won't it make you too late going to business?"

"No, I'll take a half-hour off for your benefit. If I leave here by half-past eight that will do nicely, and that's about the time you want to go to school."

So the matter was settled, and Mr. and Mrs. Maynard drove away, leaving the three children to dine by themselves. The meal was a merry one, for when thus left to themselves the children always "pretended."

"I'm a princess," said Marjorie, as she seated herself in her mother's place. "These dishes are all gold, and I'm eating birds of paradise with nectarine sauce."

Even as she spoke, Sarah brought her a plate of soup, and Midge proceeded to eat it with an exaggerated air of grandeur which she thought befitted a princess.

"I'm not a prince," said Kingdon. "I'm an Indian chief, and I'm eating wild boar steak, which I shot with my own trusty bow and arrows."

"I'm a queen in disguise," said Kitty. "I'm hiding from my pursuers, so I go around in plain, dark garbs, and no one knows I'm a queen."

"How do we all happen to be dining at one table?" asked Marjorie.

"It's a public restaurant," said King. "We all came separately, and just chanced to sit at the same table. May I ask your name, Madam?"

"I'm the Princess Seraphina," said Marjorie, graciously. "My home is in the sunny climes of Italy, and I'm travelling about to see the world. And you, noble sir, what is your name?"

"I am Chief Opodeldoc, of the Bushwhack Tribe. My tomahawk is in my belt, and whoever offends me will add his scalp to my collection!"

"Oh, sir," said Kitty, trembling; "I pray you be not so fierce of manner! I am most mortal timid."

Kitty had a fine dramatic sense, and always threw herself into her part with her whole soul. The others would sometimes drop back into their every-day speech, but Kitty was always consistent in her assumed character.

"Is it so, fair Lady?" said King, looking valiant. "Have no fear of me. Should aught betide I will champion thy cause to the limit."

"And mine?" said Marjorie. "Can you champion us both, Sir Opodeldoc?"

"Aye, that can I. But I trust this is a peaceful hostelry. I see no sign of warfare."

"Nay, nay, but war may break out apace. Might I enquire your name, fair lady?"

"Hist!" said Kitty, her finger on her lip, and looking cautiously about. "I am, of a truth, the Queen of—of Macedonia. But disguised as a poor waif, I seek a hiding-place from my tormentors."

"Why do they torment you?"

"'Tis a dark secret; ask me not. But tell of yourself, Princess Seraphina. Dost travel alone?"

"Yes; with but my suite of armed retainers. Cavalrymen and infantry attend my way, and twelve ladies-in-waiting wait on me."

"A great princess, indeed," said King, in admiration. "We are well met!"

"Methinks I am discovered!" cried Kitty, as Sarah approached her with a dish of pudding. "This damsel! She is of my own household. Ha! Doth she recognize me?"

Although used to the nonsense of the children, Sarah couldn't entirely repress a giggle as Kitty glared at her.

"Eat your dinner, Miss Kitty," she said, "an' don't be afther teasin' me."

"Safe!" exclaimed Kitty. "She knows me not! 'Kitty' she calls me! Ha!"

The play went on all through the meal, for the Maynards never tired of this sort of fun.

"I'm going out for a few minutes," said King, as they at last rose from the table. "Father said I might go down to Goodwin's to get slides for my camera. I won't be gone long."

"All right," said Marjorie, "I'm going to study my spelling. What are you going to do, Kit?"

"I'm going up to the playroom. Nannie is going to tell me stories while she sews."

So Marjorie was alone in the living-room as she took up her school-bag to get her spelling-book from it. To her dismay it was not there! The book which she had mistakenly brought for her speller was her mental arithmetic; they were much the same size, and she often mistook one for the other.

But this time it was a serious matter. The spelling-match was to be the next day, and how could she review her lessons without her book?

Her energetic mind began to plan what she could do in the matter.

It was already after seven o'clock, quite too

late to go to the schoolhouse after the missing book. If King had been at home she would have consulted him, but she had no one of whom to ask advice.

She remembered what her father had said about getting up early the next morning, and she wondered if she couldn't get up even earlier still, and go to the schoolhouse for the book before breakfast. She could get the key from the janitor, who lived not far from her own home.

It seemed a fairly feasible plan, and, though she would lose her evening's study, she determined to go to bed early, and rise at daybreak to go for the book.

"I'll write a note to mother," she thought, "telling her all about it, and I'll leave it on her dressing-table. Then, when she hears me prowling out at six o'clock to-morrow morning, she'll know what I'm up to."

The notion of an early morning adventure was rather attractive, but suddenly Marjorie thought that she might not be able to get the key from the janitor so early as that.

"Perhaps Mr. Cobb doesn't get up until seven or later, and I can't wait till then," she pondered.

"I've a good notion to go for that key to-night. Then I can go to the schoolhouse as early as I choose in the morning without bothering anybody."

She rose and went to the window. It was quite dark, for, though the streets were lighted, the lights were far apart, and there was no moon.

Of course, Marjorie never went out alone in the evening, but this was such an exceptional occasion, she felt sure her parents would not blame her.

"If only King was here to go with me," she thought. But King was off on his own errand, and she knew that when he returned he would want to fix his camera, and, anyway, it would be too late then.

Mr. Cobb's house was only three blocks away, and she could run down there and back in ten minutes.

Deciding quickly that she must do it, Marjorie put on her coat and hat and went softly out at the front door. She felt sure that if she told Nurse Nannie or Kitty of her errand, they would raise objections, so she determined to steal off alone. "And then," she thought, "it will be fun

to come home and ring the bell, and see Sarah's look of astonishment to find me at the door!"

It was a pleasant night, though cool, and Marjorie felt a thrill of excitement as she walked down the dark path to the gate, and then along the street alone.

In a few moments she reached Mr. Cobb's house, and rang the doorbell. Mr. Cobb was not at home, but when Mrs. Cobb appeared at the door, Marjorie made known her errand.

"Why, bless your heart, yes, little girl," said the kindly disposed woman. "I'll let you take the key, of course. Mr. Cobb, he always keeps it hangin' right here handy by. So you're goin' over to the school at sun-up! Well, well, you've got spunk, haven't you, now? And don't bother to bring 't back. Mr. Cobb, he can stop at your house for it, as he goes to the school at half-past seven. Mebbe he'll get there 'fore you do, after all. I dunno if you'll find it so easy to wake up at six o'clock as you think."

"Oh, yes I will, Mrs. Cobb," said Midget. "I'm going to set an alarm clock. The only trouble is that will awaken my sister, too. But I 'spect

she'll go right to sleep again. You see it's a *very* important lesson, and I *must* have that book."

"All right, little lady. Run along now and get to bed early. Are you afraid? Shall I walk home with you?"

"Oh, no, thank you. It's only three blocks, and I'll run all the way. I'm ever so much obliged for the key."

"Oh, that's all right. I'm glad to accommodate you. Good-night."

"Good-night, Mrs. Cobb," said Marjorie, and in another moment the gate clicked behind her.

As she reached the first turning toward her own home, she looked off in the other direction, where the schoolhouse stood. It was several blocks away, and Marjorie was thinking how she would run over there the next morning. And then a crazy thought jumped into her brain. Why not go now? Then she could study this evening, after all. It was dark, to be sure, but it was not so very late,—not eight o'clock yet.

The thought of entering the empty schoolhouse, alone, and in utter darkness, gave her a thrill of fear, but she said to herself:

"How foolish! There's nothing to be afraid of

in an empty schoolhouse. I can feel my way to our classroom, and the street lights will shine in some, anyway. Pooh, I guess I wouldn't be very brave if I was afraid of nothing! And just to think of having that book to-night! I can get it and be back home in twenty minutes. I believe I'll do it!"

Marjorie hesitated a moment at the corner. Then she turned away from her home and toward the schoolhouse, and took a few slow steps.

"Oh, pshaw!" she said to herself. "Don't be a coward, Marjorie Maynard! There's nothing to hurt you, and if you scoot fast, it won't take ten minutes to get that book."

In a sudden accession of bravery, Marjorie started off at a brisk pace.

As she went on, her courage ebbed a little, but a dogged determination kept her from turning back.

"I won't be a baby, or a 'fraid cat!" she said angrily, to herself. "I'm not doing anything wrong, and there's no reason at all to be frightened. But I do wish it wasn't so dark."

The part of town where the school stood was less thickly settled than where Marjorie lived, and

she passed several vacant lots. This made it seem more lonely, and the far-apart street lights only seemed to make darker the spaces between.

But Marjorie trudged on, grasping the key, and roundly scolding herself for being timid.

CHAPTER IX

A REAL ADVENTURE

When at last she stood on the stone steps of the schoolhouse, her courage returned, and, without hesitation, she thrust the key in the lock of the door.

It turned with a harsh, grating sound, and the little girl's heart beat rapidly as she pushed open the heavy door. The hall was as black as a dungeon, but by groping around she found the banister rail, and so made her way upstairs.

Her resolution was undaunted, but the awful silence of the empty, dark place struck a chill to her heart. She ran up the stairs, and tried to sing in order to break that oppressive silence. But her voice sounded queer and trembly, and it made echoes that were worse than no sound at all.

She had to go up two flights of stairs, and as she reached the top of the second flight she was

near her own classroom. As she turned the door-knob, the street door, downstairs, which she had left open, suddenly slammed shut with a loud bang. The sound reverberated through the building, and Midget stood still, shaking with an unconquerable nervous dread. She didn't know whether the door blew shut or had been slammed to by some person. She no longer pretended to herself that she was not frightened, for she was.

"I know I'm silly," she thought, as two big tears rolled down her cheeks, "but if I can just get that book, and get out of here, won't I run for home!"

Feeling her way, she stumbled into the classroom. A faint light came in from the street, but not enough to allow her to distinguish objects clearly. Indeed, it cast such wavering, ghostly shadows that the total darkness was preferable.

Counting the desks as she went along, she came at last to her own, and felt around in it for her speller.

"There you are!" she exclaimed, triumphantly, as she clutched the book. And somehow the feeling of the familiar volume took away some of the loneliness.

But her trembling fingers let her desk-cover fall with another of those resounding, reëchoing slams that no one can appreciate who has not heard them under similar circumstances.

By this time Marjorie was thoroughly frightened, though she herself could not have told what she was afraid of. Grasping the precious speller, she started, with but one idea in her mind,—to get downstairs and out of that awful building as quickly as possible.

She groped carefully for the newel-post, for going down was more dangerous than coming up, and she feared she might fall headlong.

Safely started, however, she almost ran downstairs, and reached the ground floor, only to find the front door had a spring-lock, which had fastened itself when the door banged shut.

Marjorie's heart sank within her when she realized that she was locked in the schoolhouse.

She thought of the key, but she had stupidly left that on the outside of the door.

"But anyway," she thought, "I don't believe you have to have a key on the inside. You don't to our front door at home. You only have to pull back a little brass knob."

The thought of home made a lump come into poor Marjorie's throat, and the tears came plentifully as she fumbled vainly about the lock of the door.

"Oh, dear," she said to herself, "just s'pose I have to stay here all night. I *won't* go upstairs again. I'll sit on the steps and wait till morning."

But at last something gave way, the latch flew up, and Marjorie swung the big door open, and felt the cool night air on her face once more.

It was very dark, but she didn't mind that, now that she was released from her prison, and, after making sure that the door was securely fastened, she put the key safely in her pocket, and started off toward home.

The church clock struck eight just as she reached her own door, and she could hardly believe she had made her whole trip in less than an hour. It seemed as if she had spent a whole night alone in the schoolhouse. She rang the bell, and in a moment Sarah opened the door.

"Why, Miss Marjorie, wherever have you been?" cried the astonished maid. "I thought you was up in your own room."

"I've been out on an errand, Sarah," answered Midge, with great dignity.

"An errand, is it? At this time o' night! I'm surprised at ye, Miss Marjorie, cuttin' up tricks just because the folks is away."

"Hello, Mopsy!" cried Kingdon, jumping downstairs three at a time. "What have you been up to now, I'd like to know."

"Nothing much," said Marjorie, gaily. Her spirits had risen since she found herself once again in her safe, warm, light home. "Don't bother me now, King; I want to study."

"Mother'll study you when she knows that you've been out walking alone at night."

"I don't want you to tell her, King, because I want to tell her myself."

"All right, Midge. I know it's all right, only I think you might tell me."

"Well, I will," said Midget, in a sudden burst of confidence.

Sarah had left the room, so Marjorie told King all about her adventure.

The boy looked at her with mingled admiration and amazement.

"You do beat all, Mopsy!" he said. "It was

right down plucky of you, but you ought not to have done it. Why didn't you wait till I came home, and I would have gone for you."

"I didn't mean to go, you know, at first. I just went all of a sudden, after I had really started to come home. I don't think Mother'll mind, when I explain it to her."

"You don't, hey? Well, just you wait and see!"

It was not easy to settle down to studying the speller, after such an exciting adventure to get it, but Marjorie determinedly set to work, and studied diligently till nine o'clock, and then went to bed.

Next morning her father awakened her at an early hour, and a little before seven father and daughter were seated at a cozy little *tête-à-tête* breakfast.

At the table Marjorie gave her father a full description of her experiences of the night before.

Mr. Maynard listened gravely to the whole recital.

"My dear child," he said, when she finished the tale, "you did a very wrong thing, and I must say I think you should have known better."

"But I didn't think it was wrong, Father."

"I know you didn't, dearie; but you surely know that you're not allowed out alone at night."

"Yes; but this was such a very unusual occasion, I thought you'd excuse it. And, besides, King was out at night."

"But he's a boy, and he's two years older than you are, and then he had our permission to go."

"That's just it, Father. I felt sure if you had known all about it, you would have given me permission. I was going to telephone and ask you if I might go to Mr. Cobb's, and then I thought it would interrupt the dinner party. And I didn't think you'd mind my running around to Mr. Cobb's. You know when I went there, I never thought of going to the schoolhouse last night."

"How did you come to think of it?"

"Why, I wanted my speller so much, and when I saw the schoolhouse roof sticking up above the trees, it made me think I could just as well run over there then, and so have my book at once."

"And you had no qualms of conscience that made you feel you were doing something wrong?"

"No, Father," said Marjorie, lifting her clear, honest eyes to his. "I thought I was cowardly to be so afraid of the dark. But I knew it wasn't mischief, and I didn't think it was wrong. Why was it wrong?"

"I'm not sure I can explain, if you don't see it for yourself. But it is not right to go alone to a place where there may be unseen or unknown dangers."

"But, Father, in our own schoolhouse? Where we go every day? What harm could be there?"

"My child, it is not right for any one to go into an untenanted building, alone, in the dark. And especially it is not right for a little girl of twelve. Now, whether you understand this or not, you must remember it, and *never* do such a thing again."

"Oh, Father, indeed I'll never forget that old speller again."

"No; next time you'll do some other ridiculous, unexpected thing, and then say, 'I didn't know it was wrong.' Marjorie, you don't seem to have good common-sense about these things."

"That's what grandma used to say," said

Midge, cheerfully. "Perhaps I'll learn, as I grow up, Father."

"I hope you will, my dear. And now, I'm not going to punish you for this performance, for I see you honestly meant no wrong, but I do positively forbid you to go out alone after dark without permission; no matter *what* may be the exceptional occasion. Will you remember that?"

"Yes, indeed! That isn't hard to remember. And I've never wanted to before, and I don't believe I'll ever want to again, until I'm grown up. Do you?"

"You're a funny child, Midget," said her father, looking at her quizzically. "But, do you know, I rather like you; and I suppose you get your spirit of adventure and daring from me. Your Mother is most timid and conventional. What do you s'pose she'll say to all this, Mopsy mine?"

"Why, as you think it was wrong, I s'pose she'll think so, too. I just *can't* make it seem wrong, myself, but as you say it was, why, of course it must have been, and I promise never to do it again. Now, if you've finished your coffee, shall we begin to spell?"

"Yes, come on. Since you have the book, we must make the most of our time."

An hour of hard work followed. Mr. Maynard drilled Marjorie over and over on the most difficult words, and reviewed the back lessons, until he said he believed she could spell down Noah Webster himself.

"And you must admit, Father," said Marjorie, as they closed the book at last, "that it's a good thing I did get my speller last night, for I had a whole hour's study on it, and besides I didn't have to go over there for it this morning."

"It would have been a better thing, my child, if you had remembered it in the first place."

"Oh, yes, of course. But that was a mistake. I suppose everybody makes mistakes sometimes."

"I suppose they do. The proper thing is to learn by our mistakes what is right and what is wrong. Now the next time you are moved to do anything as unusual as that, ask some one who knows, whether you'd better do it or not. Now, here's Mother, we'll put the case to her."

In a few words, Mr. Maynard told his wife about Marjorie's escapade.

"My little girl!" cried Mrs. Maynard, catching Marjorie in her arms. "Why, Midget, darling, how *could* you do such a dreadful thing? Oh, thank Heaven, I have you safe at home again!"

Marjorie stared. Here was a new view of the case. Her mother seemed to think that she had been in danger rather than in mischief.

"Oh," went on Mrs. Maynard, still shuddering, "my precious child, alone in that great empty building!"

"Why, Mother," said Marjorie, kissing her tears away, "that was just it. An empty building couldn't hurt me! Do you think I was naughty?"

"Oh, I don't know whether you were naughty, or not; I'm so glad to have you safe and sound in my arms."

"I'll never do it again, Mother."

"Do it again? Well, I rather think you won't! I shall never leave you alone again. I felt all the time I oughtn't to go off and leave you children last night."

"Nonsense, my dear," said Mr. Maynard, "the children must be taught self-reliance. But we'll talk this matter over some other time. Marjorie, you'll be late to school if you're not careful. And listen to me, my child. I don't want you to tell any one of what you did last evening. It is something that it is better to keep quiet about. Do you understand? This is a positive command. Don't ask me why, just promise to say nothing about it to your playmates or any one. No one knows of it at present, but your mother, Kingdon, and myself. I prefer that no one else should know. Will you remember this?"

"Yes, Father; can't I just tell Gladys?"

Mr. Maynard smiled.

"Marjorie, you are impossible!" he said. "Now, listen! I said tell *no one!* Is Gladys any one?"

"Yes, Father, she is."

"Very well, then don't tell her. Tell no one at all. Promise me."

"I promise," said Midget, earnestly, and then she kissed her parents and ran away to school.

Kingdon had also been bidden not to tell of

Marjorie's escapade, and so it was never heard of outside the family.

When it was time for the spelling-match, Marjorie put away her books, and sat waiting, with folded arms and a smiling face.

Miss Lawrence was surprised, for the child usually was worried and anxious in spelling class.

Two captains were chosen, and these two selected the pupils, one by one, to be their aids.

Marjorie was never chosen until toward the last, for though everybody loved her, yet her inability to spell was known by all, and she was not a desirable assistant in a match.

But at last her name was called, and she demurely took her place near the foot of the line on one side.

Gladys was on the other side, near the head. She was a good speller, and rarely made a mistake.

Miss Lawrence began to give out the words, and the children spelled away blithely. Now and then one would miss and another would go above.

To everybody's surprise, Marjorie began to work her way up toward the head of her line. She spelled correctly words that the others missed, and with a happy smile went along up the line.

At last the "spelling down" began. This meant that whoever missed a word must go to his seat, leaving only those standing who did not miss any word.

One by one the crestfallen unsuccessful ones went to their seats, and, to the amazement of all, Marjorie remained standing. At last, there were but six left in the match.

"Macaroni," said Miss Lawrence.

"M-a-c-c-a-r-o-n-i," said Jack Norton, and regretfully Miss Lawrence told him he must sit down.

Three more spelled the word wrongly, and then it was Marjorie's turn:

"M-a-c-a-r-o-n-i," said she, triumphantly, remembering her father's remark that there were no double letters in it.

Miss Lawrence looked astounded. Now there were left only Marjorie and Gladys, one on either side of the room. It was an unfortunate situation, for so fond were the girls of each other that each would almost rather fail herself than to have her friend fail.

On they went, spelling the words as fast as Miss Lawrence could pronounce them.

Finally she gave Gladys the word "weird."

It was a hard word, and one often misspelled by people much older and wiser than these children.

"W-i-e-r-d," said Gladys, in a confident tone.

"Next," said Miss Lawrence, with a sympathetic look at Gladys.

"W-e-i-r-d," said Marjorie, slowly. Her father had drilled her carefully on this word, bidding her remember that it began with two pronouns: that is, we followed by I. Often by such verbal tricks as this he fastened the letters in Marjorie's mind.

The match was over, and Marjorie had won, for the first time in her life.

Gladys was truly pleased, for she would rather have lost to Marjorie than any one else, and Miss Lawrence was delighted, though mystified.

"I won! I won!" cried Marjorie, as she ran into the house and found her mother. "Oh, Mother, I won the spelling-match! *Now*, aren't you glad I went after my book?"

"I'm glad you won, dearie; but hereafter I want you to stick to civilized behavior."

"I will, Mother! I truly will. I'm so glad I won the match, I'll stick to anything you say."

"Well, my girlie, just try to do what you think Mother wants you to, and try not to make mistakes."

CHAPTER X

IN INKY PLIGHT

"It's perfectly fine, Glad; I think it will be the most fun ever. How many are you going to have?"

"About thirty, Mother says. I can't ask Kitty, and Dorothy Adams. All on the list are about as old as we are."

"Kitty'll be sorry, of course; but I don't believe mother would let her go in the evening, anyway. She's only nine, you know."

The two friends, Marjorie and Gladys, were on their way to school, and Gladys was telling about a Hallowe'en party she was to have the following week. The party was to be in the evening, from seven till nine, and, as it was unusual for the girls to have evening parties, they looked forward to this as a great occasion. Nearly all of the children who were to be invited went to the same school that Gladys did, so she carried the

invitations with her, and gave them around before school began.

The invitations were written on cards which bore comical little pictures of witches, black cats, or jack-o'-lanterns, and this was the wording:

Though the weather's bad or pleasant,
You're invited to be present
At Miss Gladys Fulton's home
On Hallowe'en. Be sure to come.
Please accept, and don't decline;
Come at seven and stay till nine.

Needless to say these cards caused great excitement among the favored ones who received them.

Boys and girls chattered like magpies until the school-bell rang, and then it was very hard to turn their attention to lessons.

But Marjorie was trying in earnest to be good in school, and not get into mischief, so she resolutely put her card away in her desk, and studied diligently at her lessons.

Indeed, so well did she study that her lesson was learned before it was time to recite, and she had a few moments' leisure.

She took out her pretty card to admire it

further, and she scrutinized closely the funny old witch riding on a broomstick, after the approved habit of witches.

The witch wore a high-peaked black hat, and her nose and chin were long and pointed.

Suddenly the impulse seized Marjorie to make for herself a witch's hat.

She took from her desk a sheet of foolscap paper. But she thought a white hat would be absurd for a witch. It must be black. How to make the paper black was the question, but her ingenuity soon suggested a way.

She took her slate sponge, and dipping it in the ink, smeared it over the white paper.

This produced a grayish smudge, but a second and third application made a good black.

The process, however, of covering the whole sheet of paper with ink was extremely messy, and before it was finished, Marjorie's fingers were dyed black, and her desk was smudged from one end to the other.

But so interested was she in making a sheet of black paper that she paid no heed to the untidiness.

Gladys, who had turned her back on Marjorie,

in order to study her lesson without distraction, turned round suddenly and gave an exclamation of dismay. This startled Marjorie, and she dropped her sponge full of ink on her white apron.

She straightened herself up, with a bewildered air, aghast at the state of things, and as her curls tumbled over her forehead, she brushed them back with her inky hands.

This decorated her face with black fingermarks, and several of the pupils, looking round at her, burst into incontrollable laughter.

Midget was usually very dainty, and neatly dressed, and this besmeared maiden was a shock to all beholders.

Miss Lawrence turned sharply to see what the commotion might be, and, when she saw the inky child, she had hard work to control her own merriment.

"What *is* that all over you, Marjorie?" she said, in as stern tones as she could command.

"Ink, Miss Lawrence," said Midget, demurely, her simple straightforward gaze fixed on her teacher's face. This calm announcement of a fact also struck Miss Lawrence ludicrously, but she managed to preserve a grave countenance.

"Yes, I see it's ink. But why do you put it on your face and hands and apron?"

"I don't know, Miss Lawrence. You see, I was using it, and somehow it put itself all over me."

"What were you doing with it?" Miss Lawrence was really stern now, for she had advanced to Marjorie's desk, and noted the sponge and paper.

"Why, I was just making some white paper black."

"Marjorie, you have been extremely naughty. What possessed you to ink that large sheet of paper?"

"I wanted to be a witch," said Marjorie, so ruefully that Miss Lawrence had to laugh after all.

"You *are* one, my child. You needn't ever make any effort in that direction!"

"And so," went on Midget, cheered by Miss Lawrence's laughing face, "I thought I'd make me a witch's hat, to wear at recess. Truly, I wasn't going to put it on in school. But I had my lessons all done, and so——"

But by this time the whole class was in a gale.

The inky little girl, so earnestly explaining why she was inky, was a funny sight, indeed. And, as

they laughed at her, some big tears of mortification rolled down her cheeks.

These she furtively wiped away with her hand, and it is needless to say that this added the finishing touch to the smudgy black and white countenance.

Miss Lawrence gave up. She laughed until the tears ran down her own cheeks, for Marjorie was really crying now, and her little handkerchief only served to spread the inky area around her features.

"My dear child," said the teacher, at last, "I don't know exactly what to do with you. I can't wash that ink from your face, because it won't come off with only cold water. You must go home, and yet you can't go through the streets that way. But I have a brown veil I will lend you. It is fairly thick, and will at least shield you from observation."

So Miss Lawrence took Marjorie to the cloakroom, arrayed her in her own hat and her teacher's veil, and then went with the little girl downstairs to the front door. On the way she talked to her kindly, but she did not attempt to gloss over her naughty deed.

"I am sending you home, Marjorie," she said, "because you are not fit to stay here. If you were, I should keep you in, and punish you. You surely knew it was wrong to spill ink all over everything. You have ruined your desk, to say nothing of your clothes and your own belongings."

"I'm so sorry, Miss Lawrence," said penitent Midget. "I just tried to be good this morning. But I happened to think what fun it would be to have a big, high-peaked witch's hat to prance around in at recess; and I thought I could make the paper black without such a fuss."

"Well," said Miss Lawrence, with a sigh, "I don't know what to say to you. Go home now, and tell your mother all about it. I'll leave the matter of punishment in her hands. I'm sure you didn't mean to do wrong,—you never do,—but, oh, Marjorie, it *was* wrong!"

"Yes, it was, Miss Lawrence, and I'm awful sorry. I do hope Mother will punish me."

Marjorie's hope was so funny that Miss Lawrence smiled, as she kissed the stained little face through the sheltering veil, and then Midget trudged off home, thinking that as Miss Lawrence

had kissed her, she hadn't been so very bad, after all.

"What *is* the matter, child?" exclaimed Mrs. Maynard, as Marjorie marched into her mother's room. "Why have you that thing on your head, and why are you home from school at this hour?"

Midget couldn't resist this dramatic situation.

"Guess," she said, blithely. Her inky hands were in her coat pockets, her apron was covered by her outer garment, and her face was obscured by the thick brown veil.

"I can't guess just what's the trouble," said her mother, "but I do guess you've been getting into some mischief."

Marjorie was disappointed.

"Oh," she said, "I thought you'd guess that I've broken out with smallpox or measles or something!"

Mrs. Maynard was preoccupied with some intricate sewing, and did not quite catch the first part of Marjorie's remark. But the last words sent a shock to her mother-heart.

"What!" she cried. "What do you mean? Smallpox! Measles! Has it broken out in the school? Take off that veil!" As she spoke, Mrs.

Maynard jumped up from her chair, and ran to her daughter with outstretched arms.

This was more interesting, and Midget danced about as she turned her back to her mother to have the veil untied.

With trembling fingers Mrs. Maynard loosened the knot Miss Lawrence had tied, and hastily pulled off the veil. Meantime, Midget had thrown off her coat, and stood revealed in all her dreadful inkiness.

The saucy, blackened face was so roguishly smiling, and Mrs. Maynard was so grateful not to see a red, feverish countenance, that she sat down in a chair and shook with laughter.

This was just what Marjorie wanted, and, running to her mother's side, she laughed, too.

"Get away from me, you disreputable individual," said Mrs. Maynard, drawing her pretty morning dress away from possible contamination.

"Oh, Mothery, it's all dry now; it can't hurt you a bit! But isn't it awful?"

"Awful! You scamp, what does it mean?"

"Why, it's ink, Mother, dear; and do you s'pose it will ever come off?"

"No, I don't! I think it's there for the rest of your life. Is that what you wanted?"

"No. Not for my whole life. Oh, Mother, can't you get it off with milk, or something?"

Marjorie had seen her mother try to take ink-stains out of white linen with milk, and, though the operation was rarely entirely successful, she hoped it would work better on her own skin.

"Milk! No, indeed. Pumice stone might do it, but it would take your skin off, too. Tell me all about it."

So the inky little girl cuddled into her mother's arms, which somehow opened to receive the culprit, and she told the whole dreadful story. Mrs. Maynard was truly shocked.

"I don't wonder Miss Lawrence didn't know what to do with you," she said; "for I'm sure I don't, either. Marjorie, you *must* have known you were doing wrong when you began that performance. Now, listen! If somebody had told you of another little girl who cut up just such a prank, what would you have said?"

"I'd have said she ought to know better than to fool with ink, anyway. It's the most get-all-overy stuff."

"Well, why did you fool with it, then?"

"Well, you see, Mother, I did know it was awful messy, but that know was in the back of my head, and somehow it slipped away from my memory when the thought that I wanted a witch hat came and pushed it out."

"Now, you're trying to be funny, and I want you to talk sensibly."

"Yes'm, I am sensible. Honest, the thought about the witch hat was so quick it pushed everything else out of my mind."

"Even your sense of duty, and your determination to be a good little girl."

"Yes'm; they all flew away, and my whole head was full of how to make the white paper black. And that was the only way I could think of."

"Well, have your thoughts that were pushed out come back yet?"

"Oh, yes, Mother; they came back as soon as I found myself all inky."

"Then, if they've come back, you know you did wrong?"

"Yes, I do know it now."

"And you know that little girls who do wrong have to be punished?"

"Ye-es; I s'pose I know that. How are you going to punish me?"

"We must discuss that. *I* think you deserve a rather severe punishment, for this was really, truly mischief. What do you think of staying home from Gladys' Hallowe'en party as a punishment?"

"Oh, Moth-er May-nard! You just *can't* mean *that!*"

"I'm not sure but I do. You *must* learn, somehow, Midget, that if you do these awful things, you must have awful punishments."

"Yes, but to stay home from Gladys' party! Why, those horrid, cruel people in the history book couldn't get up a worse punishment than that! Mother, say you don't mean it!"

"I won't decide just now; I'll think it over. Meantime, let's see what we can do toward cleaning you up."

The process was an uncomfortable one, and, after Marjorie's poor little face and hands had gone through a course of lemon juice, pumice stone, and other ineffectual obliterators, she felt as if she had had punishment enough.

And the final result was a grayish, smeared-

looking complexion, very different from her own usual healthy pink and white.

Greatly subdued, and fearful of the impending punishment, Marjorie lay on a couch in her mother's room, resting after the strenuous exertions of her scrubbing and scouring.

"I do think I'm the very worst child in the whole world," she said, at last. "Isn't it surprising, Mother, that I should be so bad, when you're so sweet and good? Do you think I take after Father?"

Mrs. Maynard suppressed a smile.

"Wait till Father comes home, and ask him that question," she said.

CHAPTER XI

THE HALLOWE'EN PARTY

Mr. and Mrs. Maynard talked over Marjorie's latest prank, and concluded that it would indeed be too great a punishment to keep her at home from the Hallowe'en party.

So her punishment consisted in being kept at home from the Saturday meeting of the Jinks Club.

This was indeed a deprivation, as the members of the club were to plan games for the party, but still it was an easier fate to bear than absence from the great event itself.

Marjorie was so sweet and patient as she sat at home, while King and Kitty started off for the Jinks Club, that Mrs. Maynard was tempted to waive the punishment and send her along, too.

But the mother well knew that what she was doing was for her child's own good, and so she

stifled her own desires, and let Marjorie stay at home.

Midget was restless, though she tried hard not to show it. She fed the gold-fish, she read in her book of Fairy Tales, she tried amusements of various sorts, but none seemed to interest her. In imagination she could see the rest of the Jinks Club seated in the hay at Dorothy Adams', chattering about the party.

"Oh, hum," sighed Marjorie, as she stood looking out of the playroom window, "I do believe I'll never be naughty again."

"What's 'e matter, Middy?" said Rosy Posy, coming along just then. "Don't you feels dood? Want to p'ay wiv my Boffin Bear?"

Marjorie took the soft, woolly bear, and somehow he was a comforting old fellow.

"Let's play something, Rosy Posy," she said.

"Ess; p'ay house?"

"No; that's no fun. Let's play something where we can bounce around. I feel awful dull."

"Ess," said Rosy Posy, who was amiable, but not suggestive.

"Let's play I'm a hippopotamus, and you're a

little yellow chicken, and I'm trying to catch you and eat you up."

Down went Rosy Posy on all-fours, scrambling across the floor, and saying, "Peep, peep"; and down went Marjorie, and lumbered across the floor after her sister, while she roared and growled terrifically.

Mrs. Maynard heard the noise, but she only smiled to think that Marjorie was working off her disappointment that way instead of sulking.

Finally the hippopotamus caught the chicken, and devoured it with fearful gnashing of teeth, the chicken meanwhile giggling with delight at the fun.

Then they played other games, in which Boffin joined, and also Marjorie's kitten, Puff. The days, of late, had been such busy ones that Puff had been more or less neglected, and as she was a socially inclined little cat, she was glad to be restored to public favor.

And so the long morning dragged itself away, and at luncheon-time the Jinks Club sent its members home.

The Maynards were always a warm-hearted, generous-minded lot of little people, and, far from

teasing Marjorie about her morning at home, King and Kitty told her everything that had been discussed and decided at the Jinks Club, and brought her the money contributed by the members.

So graphic were their descriptions that Marjorie felt almost as if she had been there herself; and her spirits rose as she realized that her punishment was over, and in the afternoon she could go over to Gladys', and really help in the preparations for the party.

At last the night of the great occasion arrived.

Then it was Marjorie's turn to feel sorry for Kitty, because she was too young to go to evening parties. But Mr. and Mrs. Maynard had promised some special fun to Kitty at home, and she watched Midget's preparations with interest quite untinged by envy.

Kingdon and Marjorie were to go alone at seven o'clock, and Mr. Maynard was to come after them at nine.

"But Gladys said, Mother," said Midge, "that she hoped we'd stay later than nine."

"I hope you won't," said Mrs. Maynard. "You're really too young to go out at night anyway, but as it's just across the street, I trust

you'll get there safely. But you must come home as soon as Father comes for you."

"Yes, if he makes us," said Marjorie, smiling at her lenient father, who was greatly inclined to indulge his children.

"If you're not back as soon as I think you ought to be, I shall telephone for you," said Mrs. Maynard; but Marjorie knew from her mother's smiling eyes that she was not deeply in earnest.

Midget had on a very pretty dress of thin white muslin, with ruffles of embroidery. She wore a broad pink sash, and her dark curls were clustered into a big pink bow, which bobbed and danced on top of her head. Pink silk stockings and dainty pink slippers completed her costume, and her father declared she looked good enough to eat.

"Eat her up," said Rosy Posy, who was ecstatically gazing at her beautiful big sister. "Be a hippottymus, Fader, an' eat Mopsy all up!"

"Not till after she's been to the party, Baby. They'll all be expecting her."

Kingdon, quite resplendent in the glory of his first Tuxedo jacket, also looked admiringly at his pretty sister.

"You'll do, Mops," he said. "Come on, let's go. It's just seven."

Mrs. Maynard put a lovely white, hooded cape of her own round Marjorie, and carefully drew the hood up over her curls.

"See that your bow is perked up after you take this off," said the mother, as a parting injunction, and then the two children started off.

The parents watched them from the window, as they crossed the street in the moonlight, and Mrs. Maynard sighed as she said, "They're already beginning to grow up."

"But we have some littler ones," said her husband, gaily, as he prepared for a game of romps with Kitty and Rosy Posy.

When King and Marjorie rang the bell at Gladys Fulton's, the door opened very slowly, and they could hear a low, sepulchral groan.

Midge clung to her brother's arm, for though she knew everything was to be as weird and grotesque as possible, yet it was delightful to feel the shudder of surprise.

As the door opened further, they could see that the house was but dimly lighted, and the hall was full of a deep red glow. This was caused by put-

ting red shades on the lights and standing a semi-transparent red screen before the blazing wood-fire in the big fireplace.

The groan was repeated, and then they realized that it said, "Welcome, welcome!" but in such a wailing voice that it seemed to add to the gloom. The voice proceeded from a figure draped in a white sheet.

"Hello, Ghost!" said King, who knew that Dick Fulton himself was wrapped in the sheet.

"O-o-o-o-ugh!" groaned the ghost.

"You don't seem to feel well," said Marjorie, giggling. "Poor Ghost, why don't you go to bed?"

But before the ghost could speak again, a gorgeous witch came prancing up, carrying a broomstick wound with red ribbons. The witch was all in red, with a tall peaked hat of red, covered with cabalistic designs cut from gilt paper and pasted on. She groaned and wailed, too, and then spoke in a rapid and unintelligible jargon.

The Maynards knew that this witch was Gladys, but some of the guests did not know it, and were greatly mystified.

A few older persons, whom Mrs. Fulton had invited to help entertain the children, were stationed in the various rooms. Dressed in queer costumes, they played bits of weird music on the piano, or struck occasional clanging notes from muffled gongs.

All of this greatly pleased Marjorie, who loved make-believe, and she fell into the spirit of the occasion, and went about on tiptoe with a solemn, awed face. Indeed she made the ghosts and witches laugh in spite of their wish to be awesome. The rooms were decorated to befit the day, and great jack-o'-lanterns grinned from mantels or brackets. Autumn leaves were in profusion, and big black cats cut from paper adorned the walls.

Soon the party were all assembled, and then the games began.

First, all were led out to the kitchen, which was decorated with ears of corn, sheaves of grain, and other harvest trophies.

On a table were dishes of apples and nuts, not for eating purposes, but to play the games with.

There were several tubs half filled with water,

and in these the young people were soon "bobbing for apples." On the apples were pinned papers on which were written various names, and the merry guests strove to grasp an apple with their teeth, either by its stem or by biting into the fruit itself. This proved to be more difficult than it seemed, and it was soon abandoned for the game of apple-parings. After an apple was pared in one continuous strip, the paring was tossed three times round the head, and then thrown to the floor. The initial it formed there was said to represent the initial of the fate of the one who threw it.

"Pshaw!" said Marjorie, as she tried for the third time, "it always makes E, and I don't know anybody who begins with E."

"Perhaps you'll meet some one later," said Mrs. Fulton, smiling. "You're really too young to consider these 'fates' entirely trustworthy."

Then they all tried blowing out the candle. This wasn't a "Fate" game, but there were prizes for the successful ones.

Each guest was blindfolded, led to a table where stood a lighted candle, turned round three times,

and ordered to blow it out. Only three attempts were allowed, and not everybody won the little witches, owls, black cats, bats, and tiny pumpkins offered as prizes.

Marjorie, though securely blindfolded, was fortunate enough to blow straight and hard, and out went the candle-flame. Her prize was a gay little chenille imp, which she stuck in her hair with great glee.

Then they all went back to the drawing-room, where a pretty game had been arranged during their absence.

From the chandelier was suspended a large-sized "hoople" that had been twisted with red ribbon. From this at regular intervals hung, by short ribbons, candies, cakes, apples, nuts, candle ends, lemons, and sundry other things.

The children stood round in a circle, and the hoop was twisted up tightly and then let to untwist itself slowly. As it revolved, the children were to catch the flying articles in their teeth. Any one getting a lemon was out of the game. Any one getting a candle end had to pay a forfeit, but those who caught the goodies could eat them.

Next, after being seated round the room, each child was given a spoon.

Then a dish of ice-cream was passed, of which each took a spoonful and ate it. In the ice-cream had previously been hidden a dime, a ring, a thimble, a button, and a nutmeg. Whoever chanced to get the ring was destined to be married first. Whoever took the dime was destined to become very wealthy. The thimble denoted a thrifty housewife; the button, a life of single blessedness; and the nutmeg, a good cook.

Shouts of laughter arose, as they learned that Kingdon would be an old bachelor, and doubts were expressed when Gladys triumphantly exhibited the nutmeg.

"You can't ever learn to cook!" cried Dick. "You're too much of a butterfly."

"Good cooks make the butter fly," said Kingdon, and then they all laughed again. Indeed, they were quite ready to laugh at anything. For a Hallowe'en party is provocative of much merriment, and the most nonsensical speeches were applauded.

They popped corn, and they melted lead, and

they roasted chestnuts, and then some more difficult experiments were tried.

Harry Frost and Marjorie were chosen to "Thread the Needle."

Each held a cupful of water in the left hand, and in the right hand Harry held a good-sized needle, while Marjorie held a length of thread. She tried to get the thread through the needle, and he tried to help, or at least not hinder her; but all the time both must have a care that no drop of water was spilled from their cups.

The tradition was that if they succeeded in threading the needle within a minute they were destined for each other; but as they couldn't do it, Harry bade her a laughing farewell, and offered the thread to Gladys. They were no more successful, and the game was abandoned as being too difficult.

Nutshell boats was a pretty game. The tiny craft, made of English walnut shells, with paper sails, had been prepared beforehand, and the guests wrote their names on the sails, then loaded each boat with a cargo of a wish written on a slip of paper.

The boats were then set afloat in a tub of water, and by gently blowing on them their owners endeavored to make them go ashore, or rather to the side of the tub. As one hit the wood it was taken out, and the owner joyfully announced that his or her wish would come true, but many of them stayed stubbornly in mid-ocean and refused to land. The unfortunate owners condoled with each other on their hard fate.

The merry games being over, all went to the dining-room for the feast that was spread there.

The children were paired off, and, while Mrs. Fulton played stirring strains on the piano, they marched around the rooms, and so out to the dining-room.

The elaborately decorated table called forth shouts of joy, and soon all were seated in chairs round the room, enjoying the good things.

On the table were jack-o'-lanterns made not only of pumpkins, but of squashes, turnips, and even of big red or green apples.

Candles were burning in all of these, and standing about the table were queer little gnomes and witches, made of nuts, or of dried prunes. These

little figures were souvenirs, and were distributed to all the guests. The ice-cream was in the form of little yellow pumpkins, and proved to taste quite as good as it looked. There were also more substantial viands, such as nut sandwiches, apple salad, pumpkin pie, and grape jelly. Everything had some reference to Hallowe'en or to Harvest Home, and the children were not too young to appreciate this.

Supper was just about over when Mr. Maynard came after his children.

"Oh, Father," cried Marjorie, "you said you wouldn't come till nine o'clock!"

"But it's quarter-past nine now, my daughter."

"It *can't* be!" exclaimed Midge, greatly surprised; and everybody said, "Is it, really?"

"But we must have one merry round game before we part," said Mrs. Fulton, and, though several parents had arrived to take their little ones home, they all agreed to wait ten minutes more.

So they had a rollicking game of "Going to Jerusalem," and then the party was over.

Marjorie said good-night politely to Mrs. Fulton and the other grown-ups who had entertained

them, making her pretty little bobbing courtesy, as she had been taught to do.

Kingdon said good-night in his frank, boyish way, and then they went for their wraps.

"Oh, Father," said Midget as they crossed the street to their own home, "it was the very loveliest party! Can't I sit up for a while and tell you every single thing that happened?"

"I'd love to have you do that, Mopsy Midget; in fact, I can scarcely wait till morning to hear about it all. But it is my duty as a stern parent to order you off to bed at once. Little girls that wheedle fond fathers into letting them go to evening parties must be content to scoot for bed the minute they get home."

"All right, then, Father, but do get up early in the morning to hear all about it, won't you?"

"I'll guarantee to get up as early as you do, Sleepyhead," said Mr. Maynard, for Marjorie was yawning as if the top of her head was about to come off.

Mrs. Maynard accompanied the little girl to her bedroom, but Midge was too tired to do more than tell her mother that it was the most beautiful

party in the world, and that next day she should hear all about it.

"I can wait, little girl," said Mrs. Maynard, as she tucked Midget up and kissed her good-night, but the exhausted child was already in the land of dreams.

CHAPTER XII

TOTTY AND DOTTY

"MARJORIE," said her mother, one Saturday morning, "I expect Mrs. Harrison to spend the day. She will bring her little baby with her, and I want you to stay at home, so that you can wheel the baby about if she asks you to do so."

"I will, Mother. The Jinks Club meets here this afternoon anyway, and this morning I'll stay at home. Can't I ask Gladys to come over? We'd love to take care of the baby together."

"Yes, have Gladys if you like. I don't mind."

Mrs. Maynard went off to look after housekeeping affairs, and Marjorie ran over to ask Gladys to come and spend the morning.

The two girls were sitting on a bench under a tree on the front lawn, when they saw Mrs. Harrison come in at the gate. She was wheeling her baby-carriage, and Marjorie ran to meet her.

"How do you do, Mrs. Harrison?" she said.

"Mother is expecting you. Come right on up to the house. Mayn't I wheel Baby for you?"

"I wish you would, my dear. I gave nurse a holiday, but I didn't realize how tiresome that heavy carriage is, after wheeling it so many blocks."

Marjorie pushed the little coach, while Gladys danced alongside, talking to the winsome baby.

"What's her name, Mrs. Harrison?" she said.

"Oh!" replied the young mother, "she has the dignified name of Katharine, but we never call her that. I'm ashamed to say we call her Totty."

"I think Totty is a lovely name," said Midget. "It makes me think of Dotty, a baby who lives about a block away from us. She's just the same size as this baby."

"Probably she's older, then," said Mrs. Harrison, complacently; "Totty's just a year old, but she's much larger than most children of that age."

"Yes, I suppose so," said Midget, wagging her head wisely, though she really knew little about the comparative sizes of infants. Mrs. Maynard awaited them at the front door, and the procession arrived with a flourish.

"Here we are, Mother," announced Marjorie, and she and Gladys lifted baby Totty out of her nest of pillows and knit afghans.

"Why, how handy you are, child," said Mrs. Harrison. "But give her to me now, and I'll look after her."

Marjorie handed the pretty burden over, and said:

"But mayn't we take her out for a ride, Mrs. Harrison? I'm sure she ought to be out in the fresh air this morning."

"I'll see about it later," said Totty's mother, and then she went into the house with her hostess, and the girls ran away to play.

But an hour later, Mrs. Maynard called Marjorie, and said she might take the baby for a ride.

Gleefully, Marjorie and Gladys ran into the house.

They helped arrange Miss Totty's coat and cap, and so merry were they that the baby laughed and crowed, and made friends at once.

"How she takes to you!" said Mrs. Harrison. "Sometimes she is afraid of strangers, but she seems to love you."

"'Cause I love her," said Midge; "she's a sweet

baby, and so good. Shall I bring her in if she cries, Mrs. Harrison?"

"Yes; but she won't cry. She's more likely to go to sleep."

The little lady was tucked into her carriage; white mittens on her tiny hands, and a white veil over her rosy face.

"Does she need the veil?" asked Mrs. Maynard, doubtfully. "It isn't cold to-day."

"No," said Mrs. Harrison; "but the breeze is brisk; and she's used to a light veil. I think she'd better wear it."

"How far can we go?" asked Marjorie, as the preparations were completed.

"Stay in the yard, mostly," said her mother. "If you go out in the street, don't go more than two blocks away."

"All right, we won't," said Marjorie. "Come on, Glad." The two little girls started off with the baby-carriage.

"She's a careful child," said Mrs. Harrison, as she noticed Marjorie turn a corner with precision.

"Yes," said Mrs. Maynard. "And she's devoted to children. You need have no fear of Totty."

"Oh, I haven't," said Mrs. Harrison, and then the two friends returned to the house, and sat down for a long chat.

The girls had a fine time with the baby. They rolled the carriage carefully, pausing now and then to present their little guest with a bright autumn leaf, or a big horse-chestnut, which they picked up from the ground.

"Let's pretend she's an infant princess, and we're kidnapping her," said Marjorie.

"All right; what's her name?"

"Princess Petronella," said Marjorie, promptly, using a favorite name of hers.

"I don't think much of that," said Gladys; "I like Ermyntrude."

"Both, then," said Marjorie; for this was a way they often settled their differences. "Her name is Princess Ermyntrude Petronella; and we call her Ermyn Pet for short."

"But we ought to call her Princess," objected Gladys.

"Well, we will. But remember we're kidnapping her for a great reward. Hist! Some one cometh!"

They hustled the carriage behind a great pine-

tree, in pretended fear of a pursuer, though no one was in sight.

"How much shall we charge for ransom?" asked Gladys, in the hollow voice that they always used in their make-believe games.

"A thousand rubbles," answered Marjorie; "and unless the sum is forthcoming ere set of sun, the Princess shall be,—shall be——"

Marjorie hesitated. It seemed dreadful to pronounce fate, even in make-believe, on that dimpled, smiling bit of humanity.

"Shall be imprisoned," suggested Gladys.

"Yes, imprisoned in an enchanted castle."

Totty crowed and gurgled, as if greatly pleased with her destiny, and the girls wheeled her along the path to the gate.

"She reminds me so much of Dotty Curtis," said Midget. "Let's go down that way and see if Dotty's out. Mother said we could go two blocks."

On they went, crossing the curbs with great care, and soon turned in at Mrs. Curtis's house.

Sure enough, there was the nurse wheeling the Curtis baby around the drive.

"Good-morning," said Marjorie, who was

friendly with Nurse Lisa. "How is Dotty to-day?"

"She's well, Miss Marjorie," replied Lisa; "and who's the fine child with you?"

"This is little Totty Harrison; and I think she looks like Dot. Let's compare them."

The veils were taken off the two children, and sure enough they did look somewhat alike.

"They're both darlings," said Marjorie, as she gently replaced Totty's veil. "Lisa, won't you let Gladys wheel Dotty for awhile, and I'll wheel Totty. That would be fun."

"I'll willingly leave her with you for a bit, Miss Gladys. I've some work to do in the house, and if you'll keep baby for a few minutes it would be a great thing for me. Mrs. Curtis is out, but I know she'd trust you with the child, if the other lady does. But don't go off the place."

"No," said Marjorie; "this place is so big there's room enough anyway. I promise you we won't go outside the gates, Lisa."

"Isn't this fun?" cried Marjorie, as Lisa went away. "Now, we have two kidnapped princesses. Or shall we play house with them?"

"No, let's have them princesses. Now you can

name yours Petronella, and I'll name mine Ermyntrude."

This momentous question settled, the game went on. They pretended that the princesses were anxious to get back to their respective homes, and that they must resort to bribery and strategy to keep them contented.

"Nay, nay, Princess Petronella," Marjorie would say; "weep not for friends and family. I will take you to a far better place, where flowers grow and birds sing and—and——"

"And gold-fish swim," went on Gladys, who always followed Marjorie's lead, "and roosters crow—cock-a-doodle-doo!!"

This climax, accompanied as it was by Gladys' flapping her arms and prancing about, greatly delighted both princesses, and they laughed and clamored for more.

"Aren't they dears!" exclaimed Marjorie, as she looked at the two pretty babies. "Methinks no ransom is forthcoming. Must we resort to our dire and dreadful doom?"

"Aye, aye!" said Gladys. "To the enchanted castle with the fatal victims."

So long as the girls used tragic-sounding words

they didn't always care whether they made sense or not.

"On, on, then!" cried Midget. "On, on! To victory, or defeat!"

Each pushing a carriage, they ran down the long drive, across the wide lawn, and paused, flushed and breathless, at a rustic summer-house.

Into the arbor they pushed the two coaches, and then dropped, laughing, on the seats.

The babies laughed, too, and both Dotty and Totty seemed to think that to be a captive princess was a delightful fate. The girls sat still for awhile to rest, but the game went on.

"Shall it be the donjon keep?"

"Nay, not for these, so young and fair," answered Gladys. "Let's chain them with rose garlands to a silken couch."

"Huh!" said Marjorie, "that's not a dire fate. Let's do something that's more fun. Oh, Glad, I'll tell you what! Let's exchange these babies! That's what they always do in tragedies. Listen! We'll put Dotty's hood on Totty, and Totty's cap on Dotty. And change their coats, too!"

"Yes, and veils; oh, Mops! What fun! If we change their coats quickly they won't catch cold."

"Cold, pooh! It's as warm as summer."

It wasn't quite that, but it was a lovely, sunshiny day in early October, and, after running, it seemed quite warm to the girls.

Following out their project, they quickly exchanged the babies' wraps.

By this time both little ones were growing sleepy, and were in a quiet, tractable frame of mind.

"Their little white dresses are almost alike, anyway," said Gladys, as she took off Totty's coat.

"Oh, well, we wouldn't think of changing their dresses," said Mopsy; "but let's change their little shoes. I'd like to see Totty in those cunning ankle-ties."

"And I'd like to see Dotty in those pretty blue kid shoes."

"Of course, we'll change them right back, but I just want to see how they look."

Soon the transformation was complete. To all outward appearance of costume, Dotty was Totty, and Totty was Dotty. Even the veils were changed, as one was of silk gauze, the other of knitted zephyr.

Then, not in their own, but in each other's car-

riage, the reversed princesses nodded and beamed at their captors.

"Now, you push that carriage, and I'll push this," said Marjorie, taking hold of the carriage she had pushed all the time, though now it had the other baby in it.

"All right," said Gladys, "let's go round by the garden."

Slowly now, the girls went round by the large well-kept kitchen garden, and then through the flower gardens back to the front lawn.

"Why," said Marjorie, suddenly, "both these children are asleep!"

"Mrs. Harrison said Totty would go to sleep," said Gladys. "I guess all babies go to sleep about this time in the morning. It seems too bad to wake them up to change their coats back again, but I think we ought to take Totty back, don't you?"

"Yes, I do. Suppose we leave the coats and caps as they are, and then afterward we can bring back Dotty's things and get Totty's."

"Here you are!" cried Lisa, coming to meet them at the front door. "You're good little girls to mind the baby for me. I'll take her now, and I thank you much."

As Lisa spoke, she took hold of the Curtis carriage, which contained the Harrison baby.

"Ah, she's asleep, bless her heart!" she exclaimed, looking at the closed eyes, almost hidden by the white veil. "I'm glad she's getting a fine nap. Run along now with your own baby."

Partly confused by Lisa's quick and peremptory dismissal, and partly impelled by a sudden mischievous idea, Marjorie smiled a good-bye, and began trundling the other carriage toward the gate.

"Why, Midge!" whispered Gladys, aghast. "We've got the wrong baby! This is Dotty Curtis!"

"Keep still!" whispered Marjorie. "I know it. But it's a good joke on that snippy Lisa."

"She wasn't snippy."

"Yes, she was; she said 'Run along now, little girls,' after we've been helping her all the morning. She's going to let the baby stay asleep in the carriage, and she won't know it till she wakes up."

"Who won't? The baby?"

"No, Lisa. And then she'll be scared, and it will serve her right."

"But what about Mrs. Harrison? You don't want to scare her."

"That's just the thing," explained Marjorie. "I want to see if she'll know the difference in the babies. They say mothers can always tell their own children. Now we'll see."

"It's a great joke," said Gladys, giggling. "But suppose they never find it out, and the children live with their wrong mothers all their lives!"

"Don't be silly," said Marjorie.

CHAPTER XIII

A FAIR EXCHANGE?

MRS. MAYNARD opened the front door just as the children approached with the baby-carriage.

"Come along, girlies!" she cried. "Marjorie, wheel the carriage right into the hall."

"The baby's asleep, Mother," said Midget, as she and Gladys brought the carriage over the door-sill.

"Oh, is she? Totty's asleep, Mildred," she called, in a stage whisper, to Mrs. Harrison, who was upstairs.

"I thought she would be," responded that lady. "Just throw back her veil, and leave her as she is. She often takes her nap in her carriage, and there's no use waking her."

Gently, Mrs. Maynard turned back the veil from the little sleeping face, and, as she had no thought of anything being wrong, she did not notice any difference in the baby features.

"Gladys, we'd like to have you stay to luncheon," she said. "So you and Midge run upstairs and tidy your curls at once." With demure steps, but with dancing eyes, the girls went upstairs.

"I'm afraid it's mischief," whispered Gladys to Marjorie, as she tied her hair-ribbon for her.

"No, it isn't!" declared Midge, stoutly. "It's only a joke, and it can't do any harm. Mother didn't know it was a different baby, and I don't believe Mrs. Harrison will know either."

Trim and tidy once more the two friends went downstairs.

As they were on the stairs they heard the sound of the telephone bell.

Mrs. Maynard answered it, and in a moment Gladys realized that her own mother was talking at the other end of the wire.

After a short conversation, Mrs. Maynard hung up the receiver, and said:

"Mrs. Fulton says that Mr. Fulton has come home quite unexpectedly and that they are going for an afternoon's motor ride. She wants both of you girls to go, but she says you must fly over there at once, as they're all ready to start. She

tried to tell us sooner, but couldn't get a connection on the telephone."

"But we haven't had luncheon," said Marjorie, "and I'm fairly starving."

"They're taking luncheon with them," explained Mrs. Maynard. "And you must go at once, not to keep Mr. Fulton waiting. Of course, you needn't go if you don't want to, Midge."

"Oh, I do! I'm crazy to go! And luncheon in baskets is such fun! What shall I wear, Mother?"

"Go just as you are. That frock is quite clean. Put on your hat and coat, and I'll get a long veil for you."

Gladys had already run off home, and Marjorie was soon equipped and ready to follow.

As she flew out of the door, she remembered the joke about the babies.

"Oh, Mother, I've something to tell you!" she cried.

"Never mind now," said Mrs. Maynard, hurrying her off. "It will keep till you get back. And I hate to have you keep the Fultons waiting. They're in haste to start. So kiss me, and run along."

Even as she spoke, Dick Fulton appeared, saying he had been sent to hurry Marjorie up; so taking Dick's hand, the two ran swiftly down the path to the gate. Mrs. Maynard watched Marjorie's flying feet, and after she was out of sight around the corner, the lady returned to the house.

With a glance at the sleeping child, she turned to Mrs. Harrison, who was just coming downstairs.

"Totty is sleeping sweetly," she said, "so come at once to luncheon, Mildred."

"In a moment, Helen. I think I'll take off her cap and coat; she'll be too warm."

"You'll waken her if you do."

"Oh, well, she'll drop right to sleep again; she always does. And anyway, it's time she had a drink of milk."

"Very well, Mildred. You take off her wraps, and I'll ask Sarah to warm some milk for her."

Mrs. Maynard went to speak to Sarah, and Mrs. Harrison lifted the sleeping baby from the carriage.

She sat the blinking-eyed child on her knee while she unfastened her coat. Then she took off the

veil and cap, and then,—she stared at the baby, and the baby stared at her.

Suddenly Mrs. Harrison gave a scream.

"Helen, Helen!" she called to her friend, and Mrs. Maynard came running to her side.

"What *is* the matter, Mildred? Is Totty ill?"

By this time the baby too had begun to scream. Always afraid of strangers, Miss Dotty Curtis didn't know what to make of the scenes in which she found herself, nor of the strange lady who held her.

"Mildred, dear, what *is* the matter? You look horror-stricken! And what ails Totty?"

"This isn't my child!" wailed Mrs. Harrison.

"Totty isn't your child! What *do* you mean?"

"But this isn't, Totty! It isn't my baby! I don't know who it is."

"Mildred, you're crazy! Of course this is Totty. These are her blue kid shoes. And this is her coat and cap."

"I don't care if they are! It isn't Totty at all. Oh, where is my baby?"

Mrs. Harrison was on the verge of hysterics, and Mrs. Maynard was genuinely alarmed.

"Behave yourself, Mildred!" she said, sternly.

"Gather yourself together. Here, sip this glass of water."

"I'm perfectly sensible," said Mrs. Harrison, quieting down a little, as she noticed her friend's consternation. "But I tell you, Helen, this is *not* my baby. Doesn't a mother know her own child? Totty's hair is a little longer, and her eyes are a little larger. I don't know who this baby is, but she isn't mine."

"I believe you're right," said Mrs. Maynard, looking more closely at the screaming baby.

"There, there!" she said, taking the frightened little one in her own arms.

"Ma-ma!" cried the baby.

"Hear her voice!" exclaimed Mrs. Harrison. "That isn't the way my Totty talks. Oh, Helen, what has happened?"

"I don't know," said Mrs. Maynard, her face very white. "It doesn't seem possible that any marauder should have slipped into the house and put this child in Totty's place. Why, it was only about a half-hour ago that the girls brought Totty in. Mildred, are you *sure* this isn't Totty?"

"Am I sure! Yes, I am. Wouldn't you know

your own children from strangers? Helen, a dreadful crime has been committed. Somehow this baby has been substituted for mine. Oh, Totty, where *are* you now?"

"What shall I do, Mildred? Shall I call up Mr. Maynard on the telephone, or shall I ring up the police station?"

"Yes, call the police. It's dreadful, I know, but how else can we find Totty?"

Meantime Sarah appeared with a cup of warm milk.

The baby stretched out eager little hands, and Mrs. Maynard carefully held the cup for her to drink.

"She's a nice little thing," observed that lady. "See how prettily she behaves."

"Helen, you'll drive me crazy. I don't care how she behaves, she isn't Totty. Why, that isn't even Totty's little dress. So you see the kidnapper did change her shoes and wraps, but not her frock."

Mrs. Harrison showed signs of hysterics, and Mrs. Maynard was at her wits' end what to do.

"I suppose I'd better call the police," she said. "Here, Mildred, you hold this baby."

Mrs. Harrison gingerly took the baby that wasn't hers, and looked like a martyr as she held her.

But comforted by the warm food, the baby pleasantly cuddled up in Mrs. Harrison's arms and went to sleep.

Mrs. Maynard, greatly puzzled, went to the telephone, but before she touched it there was a furious peal at the front-door bell.

The moment the door was opened, in rushed a pretty, but frantic and very angry, little lady, carrying a child.

"Where's my baby?" she demanded, as she fairly stamped her foot at Mrs. Maynard.

"That's my child!" she went on, turning to Mrs. Harrison. "What are you doing with her?"

"I don't want her!" cried Mrs. Harrison. "But what are *you* doing with *my* baby?"

Totty, in the visitor's arms, held out her hands to her mother, and gurgled with glee.

"Ma-ma!" said the other baby, waking up at all this commotion and holding out her hands also.

The exchange was made in a moment, and, still

unpacified, Mrs. Harrison and Mrs. Curtis glared at each other.

Mrs. Maynard struggled to suppress her laughter, for the scene was a funny one; but she knew the two ladies were thoroughly horrified at the mystery, and mirth would be quite out of place.

"Let me introduce you," she said. "Mrs. Curtis, this is my dear friend, Mrs. Harrison. Your little ones are the same age, and look very much alike."

"Not a bit alike," said both mothers, at once.

"I confess," went on Mrs. Maynard, "that I can't understand it at all, but you certainly each have your own babies now; so, my dear Mrs. Curtis, won't you tell me what you know about this very strange affair?"

Mrs. Curtis had recovered her equilibrium, and, as she sat comfortably holding Dotty, she smiled, with a little embarrassment.

"Dear Mrs. Maynard," she said, "I'm afraid I understand it all better than you do; but I'm also afraid, if I explain it to you, you will,—it will make——"

Suddenly Mrs. Maynard saw a gleam of light.

"Marjorie!" she exclaimed.

"Yes," said Mrs. Curtis; "I think it was due to Miss Mischief. When I returned home from an errand, Lisa said that your Marjorie and Gladys Fulton had had Dotty out in her carriage, and had also another baby who was visiting you. The girls had left Dotty—or rather, Lisa supposed it was Dotty—asleep in her coach, and Nurse let her stay there, asleep, until my return. Then the child wakened—and it wasn't Dotty at all! The baby had on Dot's slippers, cap, coat, and veil, but the rest of her clothes I had never seen before. I felt sure there had been foul play of some sort, but Lisa was sure those girls had exchanged the babies' clothes on purpose. I hoped Lisa was right, but I feared she wasn't, so I picked up the baby and ran over here to see."

Mrs. Maynard was both grieved and chagrined.

"How could Marjorie do such a thing!" she exclaimed.

"Oh, don't be too hard on her, Mrs. Maynard," said Mrs. Curtis. "It's all right, now, and you know Marjorie and Gladys are a mischievous pair."

"But this is inexcusable," went on Mrs. May-

nard. "Mrs. Harrison nearly went frantic, and you were certainly greatly alarmed."

Mrs. Curtis smiled pleasantly. "I was," she admitted, "but it was only for a few moments. I was mystified rather than alarmed, for Lisa said the carriage had not been out of her sight a moment, except when the girls had it."

Mrs. Curtis took her leave, and, carrying with her her own baby, went away home.

Mrs. Maynard made sincere apologies to her friend for naughty Marjorie's mischief.

"Never mind, Helen," said Mrs. Harrison. "I can see now it was only a childish prank, and doubtless Marjorie and Gladys expected a good laugh over it; then they ran off unexpectedly and forgot all about the babies."

Mrs. Maynard remembered then that Midget had said at the last moment that she had something to tell her, but that she had hurried the child off.

"Still," she thought to herself, "that was no excuse for Midge. She should have told me."

After a refreshing luncheon, Mrs. Harrison was able to view the matter more calmly.

"Don't punish Marjorie for this, Helen," she said. "Children will be children, and I daresay those girls thought it would be a fine joke on me."

"I certainly shall punish her, Mildred. She is altogether too thoughtless, and too careless of other people's feelings. She never does wilful or malicious wrong, but she tumbles into mischief thoughtlessly. She will be honestly grieved when she learns how frightened and upset you were, and she'll never do such a thing again. But, the trouble is she'll do some other thing that will be equally naughty, but something that no one can foresee or warn her against."

"Well, just for my sake, Helen, don't punish her this time; at least, not much. I really oughtn't to have gone to pieces so; I ought to have realized that it could all be easily explained."

But Mrs. Maynard would not promise to condone Midget's fault entirely, and argued that she really ought to be punished for what turned out to be a troublesome affair.

Mrs. Harrison went home about four o'clock, and it was five before Marjorie returned.

Her mother met her at the door.

"Did you have a pleasant time, Marjorie?" she said.

"Oh, yes, Mother; we had a lovely time. We went clear to Ridge Park. Oh, I *do* love to ride in an automobile."

"Go and take off your things, my child, and then come to me in my room."

"Yes, Mother," said Marjorie, and she danced away to take off her hat.

"Here I am, Mother," she announced, a little later. "Now shall I tell you all about my afternoon?"

"Not quite yet, dear. I'll tell you all about my afternoon first. Mrs. Harrison had a very unhappy time, and of course that made me unhappy also."

"Why, Mother, what was the trouble about?"

Mrs. Maynard looked into the clear, honest eyes of her daughter, and sighed as she realized that Marjorie had no thought of what had made the trouble.

"Why did you put Dotty Curtis' cloak and hat on Totty?"

Then the recollection came back to Marjorie.

"Oh, Mother!" she cried, as she burst into a

ringing peal of laughter. "Wasn't it a funny joke! Did Mrs. Harrison laugh? Did she know her own baby?"

"Marjorie, I'm ashamed of you. No, Mrs. Harrison did not laugh. Of course she knew that the child you left in the carriage was not her little Totty, and as she didn't know what had happened, she had a very bad scare, and her nerves were completely unstrung."

"But why, Mother?" said Marjorie, looking puzzled. "I thought she wouldn't know the difference. But if she did know right away it wasn't Totty, why didn't she go over to Mrs. Curtis' and change them back again?"

"She didn't know Totty was at Mrs. Curtis'. Neither did I. We never dreamed that you couldn't be trusted to take a baby out to ride and bring her home safely. She thought some dreadful thing had happened to her child."

"Oh, Mother, did she? I'm so sorry. I never meant to tease her that way. I only thought it would be a funny joke to see her think Dotty was Totty."

"But, my little girl, you ought to have realized that it was a cruel and even a dangerous joke.

You cannot carelessly dispose of little human beings as if they were dolls, or other inanimate things."

"I never thought of that, Mother. And, anyway, I started to tell you about it, just as I went away, and you told me to run along, and tell you what I had to tell after I came home."

"I thought you'd say that; but of course I thought you meant you wanted to tell me some trifling incident, or something of little importance. Can't you understand that what you did was not a trifle, but a grave piece of misbehavior?"

"Mischief, Mother?"

Mrs. Maynard bit her lip to keep from smiling at Marjorie's innocent request for information.

"It was mischief, I suppose. But it was more than that. It was real wrong-doing. When little girls are trusted to do anything, they ought to be very careful to do it earnestly and thoroughly, exactly as it is meant to be done. If you had stopped to think, would you have thought either of those mothers *wanted* you to exchange their babies?"

Marjorie pondered.

"No," she said, at last; "but, truly, if I had

thought ever so hard I wouldn't have thought they'd mind it so much. Can't they take a joke, Mother?"

"Marjorie, dear, you have a fun-loving disposition, but if it is to make you joy and not sorrow all your life, you must learn what constitutes a desirable 'joke.' To begin with, practical jokes are rarely, if ever, desirable."

"What is a practical joke?"

"It's a little difficult to explain, my dear; but it's usually a well-laid plan to make somebody feel foolish or angry, or appear ridiculous. I think you hoped Mrs. Harrison would appear ridiculous by petting another child while thinking it was her own. And you meant to stand by and laugh at her."

This was putting it rather plainly, but Marjorie could not deny the truth of her mother's statement.

"And so," went on Mrs. Maynard, "that was a very wrong intent, especially from a little girl to a grown person. Practical jokes among your playmates are bad enough, but this was far worse."

"I understand, Mother, now that you've ex-

plained it; but, truly, I didn't mean to do anything so awfully dreadful. How are you going to punish me?"

"Mrs. Harrison was very forgiving, and begged me not to punish you severely. But I think you deserve a pretty hard penance; don't you?"

"Why, the way you tell me about it, I think I do. But the way I meant it, seems so different."

"Well, I've thought it over, and I've decided on this. You dislike to sew; don't you?"

"Yes, I do!" said Marjorie, emphatically.

"I know you do. But I think you ought to learn to sew, and, moreover, I think this would be an appropriate thing to do. I want you to make a little dress for Totty. I will do the more difficult parts, such as putting it together, but you must run the tucks, and hem it, and overhand the seams. And it must be done very neatly, as all babies' dresses should be dainty and fine. You may work half an hour on it every day, and, when it is finished, it will be a pretty little gift for Mrs. Harrison, and it will also teach you something of an old-fashioned but useful art."

Marjorie drew a deep sigh. "All right, Mother. I'll try to do it nicely; but oh, how I

hate a thimble! I never again will mix up people's babies. But I didn't think it was such an awful, dreadful thing to do."

"You're a strange child, Midget," said her mother, looking at her thoughtfully. "I never know what you're going to do next."

"I never know myself," said Marjorie, cheerfully, "but you can always punish me, you know."

"But I don't want to. I want you to behave so you won't need punishment."

"I'll try real hard," said Midge, as she kissed her mother, again and again.

CHAPTER XIV

A NOBLE SOCIETY

THE Jinks Club was having its weekly meeting, and all of the members were present.

"I think," the President was saying, "that we ought to do something that's of some use. It's all very well to cut up jinks to have fun, and we did have a lot of fun on the straw ride last week; but I mean we ought to do some real good in the world."

"But how could we, King?" said Marjorie, looking at her brother in awe.

"There are lots of ways!" declared King. "We might do something public-spirited or charitable."

"I think so, too," said Dick Fulton. "My father was talking last night about the selfishness of citizens."

"Goodness, Dick," said his sister, "we're not citizens!"

"Yes, we are, Gladys. Why aren't we? Everybody born in America is a citizen, whether old or young."

"I never dreamed I was a citizen," said Gladys, giggling. "Did you, Kit?"

"No," said Kitty; "but I'd just as lieve be. Wouldn't you, Dorothy?"

"Yes, indeed. It's nice to be citizens. Sort of patriotic, you know."

"Well," said Midget, "if we're citizens, let's do citizens' work. What do they do, King?"

"Oh, they vote, and——"

"But we can't vote. Of course we girls never can, but you boys can't for years yet. Don't be silly."

"Well, there are other things besides voting," said Dick. "Some citizens have big meetings and make speeches."

"Now *you're* silly," said Kingdon. "We can't make speeches any more than we can vote. But there must be things that young folks can do."

"We could have a fair and make money for the heathen," volunteered Gladys.

"That's too much like work," said King. "Be-

sides, we're all going to be in the Bazaar in December, and we don't want to copy that! And, anyway, I mean something more—more political than that."

"I don't know anything about politics," declared Marjorie, "and you don't, either!"

"I do, too. Father told me all about the different parties and platforms and everything."

"Let's have a platform," said Kitty. "You boys can build it."

King laughed at this, but, as the others had only a hazy idea of what a political platform was, Kitty's suggestion was not heeded.

"I'll tell you," said Dick. "When Father was talking last night, he said if our citizens were public-spirited, they'd form a Village Improvement Society, and fix up the streets and beautify the park and the common, and keep their lawns in better order."

"Now you're talking!" cried King. "That's the sort of thing I mean. And we children could be a little Village Improvement Society ourselves. Of course we couldn't do much, but we could make a start, and then grown-up people might take the notion and do it themselves."

"I think it would be lovely," said Marjorie. "We could plant flowers in the middle of the common, and we'd all water them and weed them, and keep them in lovely order."

"We couldn't plant flowers till next spring," said Gladys. "October's no time to plant flowers."

"It's not a very good time for such work, anyway," said Dick, "for most of the improvement is planting things, and mowing grass, and like that. But there are other things, 'cause Father said that such a society could make all the people who live here keep their sidewalks clean and not have any ashes or rubbish anywhere about."

"I think it's great," said King. "I move we go right bang! into it, and that we first change the name of the Jinks Club to the Village Improvement Society. Then let's keep just the same officers, and everything, and go right ahead and improve."

"Yes," said Marjorie, "and then whenever we want to turn back again to the Jinks Club, why, we can."

"Oh, we won't want to turn back," said King, confidently; "the other'll be more fun."

"All right," said Dick. "I'm secretary, so I'll make out a list of what we can do. How much money is there in the treasury, Midget?"

"Sixty cents," said Marjorie, promptly.

"Huh! Just what we paid in to-day."

"Yes, you know we spent last week's money going on a trolley ride."

"So we did. Well, we'll have to have more cash, if we're going to improve this town much."

"Then I can't belong," said Marjorie, decidedly. "I've got to begin now to save money for Christmas. I'd rather have it for that than plant flower beds."

"A nice citizen you are!" growled King. "But," he added, "I haven't any extra money, either. Christmas is coming, and that's a fact!"

"Father'll give us Christmas money," said Kitty.

"Yes; but he likes to have us save some of our allowance, too. He says it makes better gifts."

"Well," said Dick, "let's do things that don't cost money, then. Father said the streets and lanes ought to be kept in better order. Let's go around and pick up the old cans and things."

"No, thank you," said Marjorie, turning up her small nose. "I'm no ragpicker."

"I wouldn't do that, either," said Gladys; "that is, unless I had a horse and cart. A pony-cart, I mean; not a dump-cart. But, Dick, I heard Father talking last night, too; and he said a society like that would send out letters to the citizens, asking them to keep their yards in better order."

"That's the ticket, Gladys!" cried Kingdon, admiringly. "You've struck it now. Of course that's the way to accomplish what we are after, in a dignified manner. Let's write a lot of those letters, and then when the people fix their places all up, we'll say that we started the movement."

"All right," said Dick, "I think that's just what Father meant. But he said 'a circular letter.' That means have it printed."

"Oh, well, we can't afford to have it printed. Why, we can't scrape up postage for very many letters. Sixty cents; that would mail thirty letters."

"We can't write more than that," said Marjorie. "That would be five apiece for all of

us. And I don't know as Kit and Dorothy write well enough, anyway."

"Dorothy does," said Kitty, generously. "But I write like hen's tracks."

"Well, you can write those that don't matter so much," said Midge, kindly. "I'll tell you, Kitty, you can write the one to Father."

"Pooh, Father doesn't need any. Our place is always in order."

"So is ours!" cried Dick. "And ours!" piped up Dorothy.

"But don't the citizens all have to have letters?" asked Gladys. "If you just pick out the ones who don't keep their lawns nice, they'll be mad."

"No, they won't," said Dick; "or, if they are, why, let 'em *be* mad."

"I say so, too," agreed King. "If we write to the ones that need writing to, we'll have all we can do. Make out a list of 'em, Dick."

"Put down Mr. Bolton first," said Gladys. "He hasn't mowed his grass all summer. Father says his place is a disgrace to the comminity."

"Community, child," corrected her brother. "But old Bolton's place *is* awful. So is Crane's."

"Let's write their letters now, and see how they sound," suggested King, who was always in favor of quick action.

The club was meeting in the Maynards' big playroom, so paper and pencils were handy.

"It ought to be in ink, I s'pose," said King, "but I hardly ever use it, it spills about so. Let's take pencil this time."

After many suggestions and corrections on the part of each of the interested members the following letter was achieved:

"Mr. Bolton,

"*Dear Sir:* We wish kindly to ask you to keep your place in better order. We are trying to improve our fair city, and how can we do it when places like yours are a disgrace to the community? We trust you will be nice about this, and not get mad, for we mean well, and hope you are enjoying the same blessing."

"That's all right," said Marjorie, as Dick read it aloud. "Now, what do we sign it?"

"Just sign it 'The Village Improvement Society,' that's all," said Gladys.

"Wait a minute," said King. "In all letters of this sort they always abbreviate some words; it looks more business-like."

"Mother hates abbreviations," said Marjorie; "she won't let me say 'phone for telephone, or auto for motor-car."

"That's different," said King. "She means in polite society; talking, you know, or writing notes to your friends."

"Isn't a Village Improvement Society a polite society?" asked Kitty.

"Yes, of course, sister. But I don't mean that. I mean, in a business letter like this they always abbreviate some words."

"Well, abbreviate 'community,' that's the longest word," suggested Dick.

"No, that isn't the right kind of a word to abbreviate. It ought to be something like acc't for account."

"Oh, that kind? Well, perhaps we can use that word in some other letter. But can't we do the abbreviating in the signature? That's pretty long."

"So we can," said King. "Let's sign it, 'The Village Imp. Society.'"

This was adopted, as it didn't occur to any of the children that the abbreviated word might convey an unintended meaning.

Mr. Crane was attended to next, and, as they warmed to their subject, his letter was a little more peremptory. It ran:

"MR. CRANE,

"*Dear Sir:* We're improving our village, and, unless you fix up your place pretty quick, we will call and argue with you. On no ac'ct let it go another week looking as disreputibil as it now does. We mean well, if you do; but if you don't,—beware!

"THE VILLAGE IMP. SOCIETY."

"That's fine!" exclaimed Gladys, as this effusion was read out. "Now, let's do two more, and then we can each take one for a copy, and make a lot of them, just put different names at the top, you know."

"Let's make a more gentle one," said Marjorie. "Those are all right for men, but there's old Mrs. Hill, she ought to be told pleasantly to fix up her

garden and keep her pigs and chickens shut up. We almost ran over a lot of them the other day."

So a gentle petition was framed:

"DEAR MRS. HILL:

"Won't you please be so kind as to straighten out your garden a little? We'd like to see it look neat like Mr. Fulton's, or Mr. Maynard's, or Mr. Adams's. Don't go to too much trouble in this matter, but just kill or shut up your pigs and chickens, and we will all help you if need be.

"Lovingly yours,

"THE VILLAGE IMP. SOCIETY."

"That's sweet," said Marjorie; "I like that 'Lovingly yours'; it shows we have no hard feelings."

One more was framed, with a special intent toward the shopkeepers:

"MR. GREEN:

"We wish to goodness you'd keep your goods in better order. In front of your store, on side-

walk and gutter, are old fruits, potatoes, and sundry other things too old to be quite nice. So spruce things up, and you will be surprised at the result.

"Yours in good fellowship,

"THE VILLAGE IMP. SOCIETY."

"That's a good business one," said Dick. "Sort of 'man to man,' you know."

"I don't like it as well as some of the others," said Marjorie. "You copy that, Dick, and I'll copy the 'lovingly' one."

Each took a model, and all set to work, except Kitty and Dorothy, who were exempt, as their penmanship was not very legible.

"I'm tired," announced Dick, after an hour's work. "Let's stop where we are."

"All right," said King. "We've enough for the first week, I think. If these work pretty good, we'll do more next Saturday."

They had sixteen letters altogether, addressed to the best and worst citizens of Rockwell, and in high glee they started to the post-office to buy their stamps.

Mrs. Maynard willingly gave permission for

them to go the short distance to the post-office, and watched the six well-behaved children as they walked off, two by two.

After the stamps were bought, and the letters posted, they found they still had enough in the treasury for soda water all round, lacking two cents. King generously supplied the deficit, and the six trooped into the drug store, and each selected a favorite flavor.

The club meeting broke up after that, and the children went to their homes, feeling that they had greatly gained in importance since morning. And indeed they had.

That same evening many of the Rockwell people strolled down to the post-office for their mail.

In the small town there were no carriers, and the short trip to the post-office was deemed a pleasure by most.

When Mr. Maynard arrived he was surprised to find men gathered into small groups, talking in loud and almost angry voices.

The pretty little stone building was not large enough to hold them all, and knots of people were on the steps and on the small grass plot in front.

"It's outrageous!" one man was saying. "I

never heard of such impudence in a civilized town!"

"Here comes Mr. Maynard now," said another, "let's ask him."

Mr. Maynard smiled pleasantly as the belligerent ones approached him.

They were men whom he knew by name, but they were not of his own social circle.

"Look here," said John Kellogg, "I've just got this 'ere note, and some kid yonder says it's the handwritin' of your son, and I want ter know ef that's so!"

"It certainly looks like my son's writing," said Mr. Maynard, still smiling pleasantly, though his heart sank as he wondered what those children had been up to now.

CHAPTER XV

DISTURBED CITIZENS

"And I've got one that my boy says is in Dick Fulton's writin'!" declared another angry citizen.

"Here comes Dick's father now," said Mr. Maynard, as he advanced a step to meet Mr. Fulton. "They tell me our sons have been writing miscellaneous letters," he said to Mr. Fulton, and, though there was a twinkle in his eye, Mr. Fulton saw at once that there was some serious matter in hand.

"Not only your sons, but your girls, too," growled another man. "My kid says this is your Marjorie's fist."

"Well, well, what are the letters all about?" asked Mr. Fulton, who did not like the attitude of the complainants.

"Read 'em, and see!" was the quick response,

and half a dozen letters were thrust toward the two gentlemen.

Mr. Fulton adjusted his glasses, and both he and Mr. Maynard quickly scanned the notes that were only too surely the work of their own children.

"The signature is misleading," said Mr. Fulton, who was inwardly shaking with laughter at the absurd epistles, but who preserved a serious countenance; "but I feel sure it means 'The Village Improvement Society.' I have often thought such a society would be a good thing for our town, but I didn't know one had been started."

"But who *is* the society? A lot of youngsters?" demanded John Kellogg.

"Ahem! These documents would lead one to think so, wouldn't they?" said Mr. Fulton, suavely.

But the offended men were not to be so easily placated.

"See here," said one of them, assuming a threatening tone, "these 'ere letters is insults; that's what I call 'em!"

"And I!" "Me, too!" said several others.

"And as they is insults," went on the first speaker, "we wants satisfaction; that's what we wants!"

"Yes, yes!" "We do!" chorused the crowd.

Mr. Fulton and Mr. Maynard were decidedly nonplussed. It was difficult to take the matter seriously, and yet, as these men were so incensed, it might make an unpleasant publicity for the two families, unless they placated the angry recipients of those foolish letters.

Mr. Maynard was a quick thinker, and a man of more even disposition and affable demeanor than Mr. Fulton. So Mr. Maynard, with a nod at his friend, jumped up on a chair and began to address the crowd, as if he were on a public platform.

"My friends and fellow-townsmen," he said: "in the first place, Mr. Fulton and I want to admit that these letters which you have received are without doubt the work of our own children. They were written entirely without our knowledge or consent, and they represent a childish endeavor to do well, but they do not show experience, or familiarity with grown people's ways of dealing with these matters. We, therefore, apologize to

you for the offence our children have caused you, and trust that, as most of you have children of your own, you will appreciate the facts of the case, and forgive the well-meaning, but ill-doing, little scamps."

Mr. Maynard's pleasant voice and genial smile went far to establish good-feeling, and many voices murmured, "Aw, that's all right," or, "Little scalawags, ain't they?"

"And now," Mr. Maynard went on, "since we are gathered here, I would like to make a suggestion that may lead to a good work. Several of our prominent business men have thought that a Village Improvement Society could do a great and good work in our town. I, myself, have not sufficient leisure to take this matter in charge, but I wish that a committee of our citizens might be appointed to consider ways and means, with a view to organizing a society in the near future. Should this be done, I stand ready to contribute one thousand dollars to the general fund of the society, and I've no doubt more will be subscribed by willing hearts."

Mr. Maynard stepped down from the chair, and Mr. Fulton immediately mounted it.

"I, too, will gladly subscribe the same amount as Mr. Maynard," he said; "this project has for some time been in my mind, and I am pretty sure that it was because of overhearing some of my conversations on the subject that my young people took it up, and earnestly, if in a mistaken manner, endeavored to start such a society."

The sentiment of the meeting had entirely changed. The men who had been most angry at their letters were now enthusiastic in their desire for the immediate formation of the society.

"Land sakes!" said old Mr. Bolton, "them children didn't mean nothin' wrong. They jest didn't know no better."

"That's so," said John Kellogg. "Like's not, some of our kids might 'a' done a heap worse."

After the election of a chairman for the provisional committee, and a few more preliminary moves in the matter, Mr. Maynard and Mr. Fulton went away, leaving it all in the hands of their fellow-townsmen.

"You did good work," said Mr. Fulton, appreciatively. "I confess I was afraid of an

unpleasant turn of affairs. But you won their hearts by your tact and genial manner."

"That's the best way to manage that sort of an uprising," returned Mr. Maynard. "Of course we are, in a way, responsible for our children's deeds, and there's a possibility that some of those letters could make trouble for us. But I think it's all right now. The next thing is to choke off the children before they go any further. What *do* you suppose possessed them to cut up such a trick?"

"What possesses them to get into one sort of mischief after another, as fast as they can go?"

"Well, this isn't really mischief, is it? They meant well, you know. But I'll reserve judgment until after I talk with my young hopefuls."

The two men separated at the corner, and Mr. Maynard went directly to his own home.

He found Mrs. Maynard and the three older children in the living-room, variously engaged with books or games.

"Well," he said, as he entered the room. "I'd like an immediate interview with The Village Imps."

Each of the three gave a start of surprise.

"What do you mean, Father?" cried Marjorie.

"Why, if you belong to an Imp Society you must be Imps; aren't you?"

"Who told you about it?" asked Kitty, disappointedly. "It was to be a secret, until all the town was stirred up."

"The town is pretty well stirred up now, my girl. But I don't want reports of my children's doings from other people. Tell me all about it, yourselves."

"We will, Father," said Marjorie, evidently glad of the chance. "You tell, King; you're president."

Nothing loath, King began the tale. He gave a full account of their desire to do something that would be a public benefit of some sort. He told of Dick's suggestion, founded upon Mr. Fulton's remarks about a Village Improvement Society. He explained that they wrote letters because they hadn't money enough for any more expensive proceeding, and he wound up by proudly stating that they had mailed sixteen letters already, and hoped to send more the following week.

So earnest was the boy in his description of the work, and so honest his pride in their efforts so far, that Mr. Maynard deeply regretted the necessity of changing his view of the matter.

"Kingdon," he said, "you're fourteen years old, and I think you're old enough to know that you ought not to engage in such important affairs without getting the advice of older people."

"Oh, Father!" cried Marjorie. "Was this wrong, too? Is *everything* mischief? Can't we do anything at all without we have to be punished for it? We thought this was truly a good work, and we thought we were doing our duty!"

Like a little whirlwind, Marjorie flew across the room, and threw herself, sobbing, into her father's arms.

"My dear child," he said, kissing her hot little brow, "wait a moment till I explain. We want to talk over this matter, and get each other's ideas about it."

"But you're going to say it was wrong,—I know you are! And I was trying so hard *not*

to do naughty things. Oh, Father, how can I tell what I can do, and what I can't?"

"There, there, Midget, now stop crying. You're not going to be punished; you don't deserve to be. What you did was not wrong in itself,—at least it would not have been for older people. But you children are ignorant of the ways of the grown-up world, and so you ought not to have taken the responsibility of dictating to or advising grown people. That was the wrong part."

"But we meant it for their good, sir, more than for our own," said King, by way of justification.

"That's just it, Kingdon, my boy. You're too young yet to know what *is* for the good of grown men and women who are old enough to be your parents and grandparents. You wouldn't think of dictating to your mother or myself 'for our good,' would you? And all grown people ought to be equally free from your unasked advice."

"But, Father," insisted King, "if you kept this place looking like a rubbish-heap, wouldn't I have a right to ask you not to?"

"You'd have only the right of our relationship. A child has many privileges with his parents that he hasn't with any one else in the world. But to come right down to the facts: the letters that you wrote were ill-advised, arrogant, and impertinent."

Kitty looked frankly bewildered at these big words, Marjorie buried her face on her father's shoulder in a renewed burst of tears, while Kingdon flushed a deep red all over his honest, boyish face.

"I'm sorry, Father," he said; "we didn't mean them to be, and we didn't think they were. We thought they were straightforward and business-like."

"That shows your ignorance, my son. Until you have been in business, you cannot really know what grown men and women consider business-like. I can tell you John Kellogg and Tom Bolton didn't consider them masterpieces of business-like literature."

"How do you know?" said Marjorie, lifting her wet face from its hiding-place.

"I saw them, dearie; both the men and the letters, at the post-office to-night. There were many

others,—a dozen or more,—and they were, one and all, extremely angry at the letters they had received. Mr. Fulton and I were both there, and, when we were told that the letters were the work of our children, we could scarcely believe it."

"And we thought you'd be so proud of us," said Kitty, in such a dejected voice that Mrs. Maynard caught up the little girl and held her in her arms.

Of course, this was the first Mrs. Maynard had heard of the whole affair, but, as Mr. Maynard was conducting the discussion, she said little.

"What ought we to have done, Father?" said King, who was beginning to see that they had done wrong.

"When you first thought of the plan, my son, you should have realized that it concerned grown people entirely; and that, therefore, before you children undertook its responsibilities you should confer with your mother or me. Surely you see that point?"

"Yes, sir," said the boy.

"When your plans include only children, and

are not disobedience to rules either actual and implied, then you are usually free to do pretty much as you like."

"But we thought this would do the town good."

"That was a worthy sentiment, and a true one, too. But the matter of a town improvement is not a matter for children to attend to, *unless* they are working under the direction of older people. Had I advised you to write these letters, which, of course, I never should have done, for you are not the proper ones to write them, but had I done so, I would have shown you how to word them that they might not offend. Inexperienced letter-writers cannot expect to write a sort of letter which requires special delicacy, tact, and graciousness."

"Father," said Marjorie, solemnly, "I'm never going to do anything again, but go to school and eat my meals and go to bed. Anything else I ever do is wrong."

"Now, Mopsy Midget, don't talk nonsense. You're twelve years old. You've a lot to learn before you're a grown-up, and most of it must be learned by experience. If you never do anything,

you'll never get any experience, and at twenty you'll only know as much as you did at twelve! How would you like that?"

"Not much," said Marjorie, whose spirits rose as her father adopted a lighter tone.

"Then just go on and have your experiences. Cut up jinks and have all the fun you can; but try to learn as you go along to discriminate between the things you ought to do and the things you oughtn't. You won't always guess right, but if you keep on living you can always guess again."

"What did those men say?" asked King, who was brooding over the scene in the post-office.

"Oh! they were pretty mad at first, and I think they were quite ready to come after you children with tomahawks and war-whoops. But Mr. Fulton and I patted them fondly on the shoulder, and told them you were harmless lunatics and they mustn't mind you."

"We're not crazy, Father," said Kitty, who was inclined to be literal.

"No, Kitsie, you're not; and I don't want you to drive me crazy, either. You're three of the

most delightful children I ever met, and whenever I can pull you out of your scrapes I'm only too glad to do so. I may as well tell you at once that Mr. Fulton and I fixed up this Imp Society matter very satisfactorily; and if you don't start in to lay a new asphalt road, or build a cathedral, I think I can keep up with you."

"How did you fix it, Father?" asked Marjorie, brightening with renewed interest, as she learned that the trouble was over.

"Oh! I told the gentlemen who were most interested that if they didn't like the way my children improved this village that they'd better do the improving themselves. And they said they would."

"Really, Father?"

"Really, King. So now you're all well out of it, and I want you to stay out. Unless they ask for your assistance, later on; and I doubt if they'll do that, for between you and me they don't seem to approve of your methods."

"I think it was dreadful for the children to write those letters," said Mrs. Maynard. "And I don't think, Ed, that you've quite explained to them how very wrong it was."

"Perhaps not," said Mr. Maynard, "but can't we leave that part of the subject till some other time? For my part, I'm quite exhausted scolding these young reprobates, and I'd like a change to smiles instead of tears. And somehow I have a growing conviction that they'll never do it again. Will you, chickabiddies?"

"No, sir!" came in a hearty chorus.

"Of course they won't," said Mrs. Maynard, laughing. "It will be some other ridiculous freak. But I'll be glad to drop the subject for the present, too, and have a pleasant half-hour before it's bedtime for babes."

"And aren't we to be punished?" asked Marjorie, in surprise.

"Not exactly punished," said her father, smiling at her. "I think I shall give you a severe scolding every night for a week, and then see if you're not little paragons of perfection, every one of you."

"I'm not afraid of your scolding," said Marjorie, contentedly cuddling close to her father; "but I thought maybe—perhaps—you'd want us to apologize to those people who were so angry."

"I did that for you, dearie. What's the use of having a father if he can't get you out of a scrape now and then? And now let's roast some chestnuts, and pop some corn, and have all sorts of fun."

CHAPTER XVI

ROSY POSY'S CHOICE

It was time to decide the momentous question of where the next Ourday should be spent.

Already it was Wednesday, and on Saturday the Maynards would have their November Ourday. It was Rosy Posy's turn to choose, but as her selections were usually either vague or impossible, the other children were not backward in offering suggestions to help the little one out.

This time, however, Rosamond was quite positive in her opinion.

When her father asked her where she wanted to go for a day's outing, she at once responded, "To Bongzoo."

"To Bongzoo!" exclaimed Mr. Maynard. "Where in the world is that? Or what is it? It sounds as though it might be either French or Choctaw."

"Ess," said Rosy Posy, "we'll all go to Bongzoo; me an' muvver, an' all of us, an' Daddy, too."

"And how do we get there, Baby? Walk, ride, or swim?"

"I don' know," said Rosy Posy. "But Marjorie knows. She told me to say 'Go to Bongzoo,' so I said it."

Then the laugh was on Marjorie.

"Oho!" said Mr. Maynard. "So Mopsy's been electioneering all right. Out with it, Midge. What does Baby mean by Bongzoo?"

"She means the Bronx Zoo," said Marjorie. "I thought we'd all like to see the animals there. But it isn't my turn to choose, so I told Rosy Posy to choose that."

"An' I do!" declared the child, stoutly. "I choose Bongzoo, an' I wants to go there."

"I think it's a fine place to go," said Mr. Maynard. "What made you think of it, Midge?"

"One of the girls at school went there some time ago, and she told us all about it; and, oh, Father, it's beautiful! All lions and tigers and waterlilies and Florida trees!"

"I doubt if the waterlilies are in bloom just

now, but I'm sure the tigers are flourishing. Well, I'm for the Zoo. Will you go, Mother?"

"Yes, indeed," said Mrs. Maynard; "I don't want to miss such a fine-sounding Ourday as that."

"I think it's great!" declared King. "Bob Carson says the birds are wonderful, and the alligators walk around on the grass."

"Oh!" cried Kitty, "then I don't want to go. I wouldn't meet an alligator for anything!"

"They have their own grass plat, Kitsie," said her father. "They don't trespass on the grass reserved for visitors."

So the Ourday was unanimously settled, and, as that sort of a trip involved little preparation, there was nothing to do but hope for pleasant weather.

"Though if it rains," said Marjorie, comfortably, "Father will fix up something nice for us in the house."

But Saturday turned out to be a lovely day, and the Maynard family took an early train for New York City, in order to make their stay at the Zoo as long as possible.

They did not invite any other guests, as Mr. and Mrs. Maynard thought their own four children responsibility enough.

The young people greatly enjoyed the journey in the train, and across the ferry, and then Rosy Posy asked that they might go in what she called the "Cellarway." She meant the Subway, and, as this was a quick way to reach Bronx Park, Mr. Maynard consented. The children were of enthusiastic natures, and inclined to be conversational, but the noise of the Subway trains drowned their voices, and, for once, they were obliged to be silent. But when they reached their destination, and entered the beautiful park, their tongues were loosed again, and they kept up a running fire of chatter.

Rosy Posy trotted along by her mother's side, King and Kitty walked together, and Midget pretended to walk by her father's side, but really danced back and forth from one to another. They visited the Botanical Park first, and as the early November day was clear and cold, they were not sorry to step into the warm greenhouses.

Marjorie specially liked the great jungles of

Florida and other southern vegetation. The banyan trees and giant palms reached up to the high ceiling, and the luxuriant foliage and brilliant blossoms made northern plants seem dwarfed beside them. It was an instructive experience, as well as an entertaining one, for Mr. Maynard called the children's attention to the printed names on the plants, and, though they could not remember all of them, they learned a great many.

"It's fun to study botany this way," said Marjorie, as her father showed her the strange Mexican cacti, and told her about the deserts where they grow.

King nearly scared Kitty out of her wits by pretending there was a great snake writhing among the dark-leaved reeds, but almost immediately she discovered it was only a rubber hose, and she laughed with the rest.

There were many greenhouses, but after they had been through most of them, Mr. Maynard proposed that they have an early luncheon, and then go to see the animals.

So they went to the picturesque restaurant, and the six travellers suddenly discovered they were both tired and hungry.

"But an hour's rest and some good food will make us all over anew," said Mr. Maynard, "and then we'll be quite ready to call on the lions and the tigers."

"Is this Bongzoo?" asked Rosy Posy, after she had been comfortably placed in a high chair almost like her own at home.

"Well, this is the place where they feed the animals," said her father, "and as you're a little kitten, I suppose you'll have some milk?"

"Milk, an' meat, an' 'tatoes, an' pie, an' evvyfing," announced Rosy Posy, folding her chubby hands to await contentedly the filling of her comprehensive order.

Being an Ourday the children were allowed to select whatever they chose from the *menu*, their parents, however, reserving the right of veto.

"I want roast beef," said Kitty, after scanning the more elaborate, but unfamiliar, names.

"Oh, pshaw, Kit," said her brother, "you can have that at home! Why don't you take something different? It's more of a treat. I choose Supreme of Chicken."

"I don't like soup," said Kitty, innocently, and then they all laughed.

"I think I'll have lobster salad," announced Marjorie, after long study.

"I think you won't," said her father, promptly. "Nobody's to be ill this afternoon, and that's a risky dish for little folks. Try again, sister."

Marjorie cheerfully made another perusal of the bill of fare, and at last declared in favor of chicken hash.

This was willingly allowed, and when Kitty decided on an omelette with jelly, her choice was also commended. Mrs. Maynard added a few wise selections, which were for the good of all concerned, and each chose a favorite ice-cream.

"Oh, what a good time we're having!" said Marjorie. "I do love to eat at a restaurant."

"It is pleasant once in a while," said her father. "But for daily food, give me my own family table."

"Yes, indeed," agreed Marjorie; "I wouldn't like to *live* in a restaurant."

After luncheon they visited the great "rocking-

stone." The immense rock, weighing many tons, was poised on a tiny base, and it almost seemed as if Rosy Posy might push it over, so unstable did it look.

But indeed she couldn't, nor any of the others, though it was said that a pressure of fifty pounds could make the great stone rock on its base.

"And now," said Mr. Maynard, "we're really getting into the Zoo part of our day. This, Rosy Posy, is your Bongzoo, and first of all here are the bears."

Delightedly all the children viewed the bears. The great creatures seemed so mild and gentle, and played with one another in such kittenish fashion, that even Rosy Posy felt no fear of them. There were various species, from the big grizzlies to the little brown cinnamon bears, and all waddled about in a state of comfortable fatness, or lay in the sun and slept peacefully.

The lions and tigers were far less placid. They stalked up and down their small cages, and now and then growled or roared as if very weary of their long and solitary confinement.

"He wants to come out," said Rosy Posy, of a particularly big and ferocious-looking lion. "Let him out, Father, he wants to play wiv us."

"Oh! I think I'd better not, Baby. He might run away and forget to come back."

"No," insisted the child; "I'll put my arms round him, an' make him stay wiv me."

"We won't have time now, Rosy Posy," said King. "We're going on now to see the panthers and wolves. Come along with brother."

So the child slipped her little hand in King's, and they led the family procession for a while.

The monkeys were a great source of amusement, and Rosy Posy thought some of the chimpanzees were little old men, they chattered so glibly.

But the birds proved a delight to all.

"Oh!" cried Marjorie. "Will you look at those red and blue parrots!"

"Parrakeets," corrected Mr. Maynard. "And fine ones, too. And how beautiful are the white ones with yellow topknots."

They studied, with some care, the names and homes of the birds, and learned to distinguish the

toucans and orioles and other beautiful, bright-colored species.

Then on to the big, wise-eyed owls, who blinked and winked at them in a sleepy sort of a way.

The eagles came next, and all were proud of the National bird, as they viewed the fine specimens on exhibition. The bald eagle and the white eagle were favorites, and the vultures and condors were disliked by all.

An interesting structure was an immense cage, which was larger than any house, and entirely open to view. They walked round all four sides of it, and were enchanted with its beautiful occupants. Storks and flamingoes stood about, on one leg, motionless, as if absorbed in deep contemplation. Pelicans, with their strange bills, and ducks of most brillant plumage waddled around and seemed to be entirely interested in their eager audience.

In another enclosure, cranes and adjutant birds flapped their great wings, and made long, hopping jumps, and then stood still, as if posing for their pictures.

Marjorie proved herself specially quick in pick-

ing out each bird, from its descriptive placard, and she learned the names, both English and Latin, of many of them.

"You don't mind going to school this way, do you, Midget?" asked her father.

"Not a bit! I love it. If I could learn all my lessons out of doors, and with you to help teach me, I'd be willing to study all the time."

"Well, we must come here again some day," said Mr. Maynard, "and see if you remember all these jawbreaker names. Now, let's visit the beavers."

The beaver pond was a strange sight, indeed. Originally there had been many tall trees standing in the swampy enclosure, but now nearly all of them lay flat in the water. The little busy beavers had gnawed around and into the trunks, near the ground, until the tree toppled and fell over.

"Why do they do it, Father?" asked King, greatly interested.

"They want to make bridges across the water," answered Mr. Maynard. "It shows a wonderful sagacity, for they gnaw the trunk of the tree, at first such a place, and in just such a way, that

the tree will fall exactly in the direction they want it to."

"They must scamper to get out of the way when a tree is about to fall," observed Mrs. Maynard.

"Indeed, they do," said her husband. "They are very clever, and most patient and untiring workers. See, the trunks they have gnawed have been protected by wire netting that visitors may see them. And some of the standing trees are protected near the ground by wire netting that they may not be upset at present."

"Now I know my beaver lesson," said Marjorie; "let's go on. Father, I think I'll change that piece I spoke in school to 'How doth the busy little beaver,' instead of bee!"

"They're equally busy creatures, my dear. You may take a lesson from either or both."

"No, thank you. I don't want to work *all* the time. I'll be a butterfly sometimes, 'specially on Ourdays."

Marjorie jumped and fluttered about more like a grasshopper than anything else, and, swinging by her father's hand, they passed on to the deer ranges.

Here were all sorts of deer, and the gentle, timid-eyed creatures came tamely to the railings or nettings and made friends with the visitors.

"It would be fun to feed them," said Mr. Maynard, "but it's strictly forbidden, so we can only talk to them, and hope that they understand. And now, my infants, the sun is travelling homeward, and I think we'll take our next lesson from him. Would you rather have some sandwiches and ice-cream now, or wait until you get home, to refresh yourselves?"

"Now, now, now!" chorused the whole party.

"Do you know, I thought you'd say that," said Mr. Maynard. "So suppose we go into this pleasant-looking tea-room, and have a social hour."

"This makes twice for ice-cream, to-day," observed Kitty, as she lovingly ate her favorite dainty. "And do we have it to-night for dinner, Mother?"

"Of course. Always on an Ourday night."

"Oh, how lovely! Three times in one day."

"Kitty," said her mother, smiling, "I believe your highest ambition is ice-cream."

"Yes, it is," said Kitty, complacently; "or else huckleberry pie."

After the ice-cream, there was the trip home. But the children were not tired, and enjoyed thoroughly the ride, which was more of a treat to them than to their parents.

The Subway was fun, the ferryboat ride a delight, and after they were in the train on the New Jersey side, they coaxed the conductor to turn two seats to face each other. Then the quartette occupied these, and chattered gaily over the events of the day.

"Isn't it lovely," said Marjorie, as they at last entered their own front door, "to think we've had such a good time, and yet Ourday isn't over yet?"

"I know it," said Kitty. "And 'tis specially lovely for me, 'cause I can stay up to dinner, and dress up, and everything."

Ourdays always wound up with an extra good dinner, and a touch of gala costume in honor of the occasion. Then after dinner the evening was devoted to games or stories or fun of some sort, in which Mr. Maynard was the ringleader. Other evenings he was not to be disturbed, unless he chose, but Ourday evenings he belonged to the

children, and willingly did whatever they asked him to.

But at nine o'clock the Ourday was over, and the children trooped off to bed, invariably repeating the same old story, "Now this has *really* been the very best Ourday we *ever* had!"

CHAPTER XVII

A SUBSTITUTE GUEST

THANKSGIVING DAY came late that year. The red-lettered Thursday on the calendar didn't appear until the last part of the month. But winter had set in early, and already there was fine coasting and skating.

Marjorie loved all out-of-door sports, and the jolly afternoons spent on the hill or on the lake sent her home with cheeks as rosy as a hard, sound, winter apple.

The Thanksgiving season always meant festivity of some sort. Sometimes they all went to Grandma Sherwood's in orthodox traditional fashion, and sometimes they went to Grandma Maynard's, who lived in New York.

But this year Mr. and Mrs. Maynard expected friends of their own, some grown-ups from the city, to spend the holiday.

"No children!" exclaimed Marjorie, when she heard about it.

"No, Midge," said her mother. "You must help me entertain my guests this time, as I sometimes help you entertain yours."

"Indeed you do, you sweetest mother in all the world!" cried impetuous Midget, as she flung herself into her mother's arms. Midget's embraces were of the strenuous order, and, though Mrs. Maynard never warded them off, she was often obliged to brace herself for the sudden impact.

"And I'll help you a heap," went on Marjorie. "What can I do? May I make Indian pudding with raisins in it?"

Midge was just having a spell of learning to cook, and good-natured Ellen had taught her a few simple dishes, of which Indian pudding was the favorite.

"No thank you, dearie. As it is a festival occasion, I think we'll have something a little more elaborate than that. You can help me better by trying to behave decorously, and by keeping the other children quiet when they are in the drawing-room. Mr. and Mrs. Crawford have never

had any children, and they don't like noise and confusion."

"You're more used to it, aren't you, Mother?" said Marjorie, again springing to give her mother one of her spasmodic embraces, and incidentally upsetting that long-suffering lady's work-basket.

"I have to be if I live with my whirlwind of an eldest daughter," said Mrs. Maynard, when she could get her breath once more.

"Yes'm. And I'm awful sorry I upset your basket, but now I'll just dump it out entirely, and clear it up from the beginning; shall I?"

"Yes, do; it always looks so nice after you put it in order."

And so it did, for Marjorie was methodical in details, and she arranged the little reels of silk, and put the needles tidily in their cushion, until the basket was in fine order.

"There," she said, admiring her own work, "don't you touch that, Mother, until after Thanksgiving Day; and then it will be all in order for Mrs. Crawford to see. When is she coming?"

"They'll arrive Wednesday night and stay over until Friday morning. You may help me make the guest-rooms fresh and pretty for them."

"Yes; I'll stick pins in the cushions to make the letters of their names. Shall I?"

"Well, no; I don't believe I care for that particular fancy. But I'll show you how I do like the pins put in, and you may do it for me. Now, run out and play, we'll have ample time for our housekeeping affairs later on."

Away went Marjorie, after bestowing another tumultuous bear-hug on her mother. She whisked on her hat and coat, and with her mittens still in her hand, flew out of the door, banging it after her.

"Cold weather always goes to that child's muscles," thought Mrs. Maynard, as she heard the noise. "She never bangs doors in summer time."

"Wherever have you been?" cried the others, as Marjorie joined them on the hill.

"Talking to Mother. I meant to come out right away after school, but I forgot about it."

Gladys Fulton looked at her curiously. She wasn't "intimate" with her mother, as Marjorie was, and she didn't quite understand the relationship.

In another minute Midge was on her sled, and,

with one red-mittened hand waving on high, was whizzing down the hill.

King caught up to her, and the others followed, and then they all walked back up the hill together.

"Going to have fun, Thanksgiving Day?" asked Dick Fulton, as they climbed along.

"No. We're going to have a silly old Thanksgiving," said Marjorie. "Only grown-ups to visit us, and that means we don't have any good of Father at all."

"Aw, horrid!" said King. "Is that the programme? I didn't know it."

"Yes!" went on Marjorie, "and I've promised Mother to behave myself and to make all you others behave, too." Her own eyes danced as she said this, and King burst into laughter.

"That's a good one!" he cried. "Why, it will take the whole Maynard family to make you behave yourself, let alone the rest of us."

"No, truly, I'm going to be good, 'cause Mother asked me most 'specially." Marjorie's earnest air was convincing, but King was skeptical.

"You mean to be good, all right," he said,

"but at the party you'll do some crazy thing without thinking."

"Very likely," said Mopsy, cheerfully, and then they all slid down hill again.

The day before Thanksgiving Day everything was in readiness for the guests.

Mr. Maynard had come home early, and the whole family were in the drawing-room to await the arrival.

This, in itself, was depressing, for to be dressed up and sitting in state at four o'clock in the afternoon is unusual, and, therefore, uncomfortable.

Marjorie had a new frock, of the material that Kitty called "Alberta Ross." It was very pretty, being white, trimmed here and there with knots of scarlet velvet, and Midget was greatly pleased with it, though she looked longingly out of the window, and thought of her red cloth play-dress and her shining skates.

However, she had promised to be good, and she looked as demure as St. Cecilia, as she sat quietly on the sofa with an eye on the behavior of her younger sisters.

Kitty and Rosy Posy, both in freshly-laundered,

white muslin frocks, also sat demurely, with folded hands, while King, rather restlessly, moved about the room, now and then looking from the window.

"You children get on my nerves!" said Mr. Maynard, at last. "I begin to think you're not my own brood at all. Is it necessary, Mother, to have this solemn stillness, just because we expect some friends to see us?"

Mrs. Maynard smiled.

"These children," she said, "have no idea of moderation. It *isn't* necessary for them to sit like wax-works, but if they didn't they'd be turning somersaults, or upsetting tables,—though, of course, they wouldn't mean to."

"I daresay you're right," said Mr. Maynard, with a sigh, "and I do want them to behave like civilized beings, when our friends come."

"There they are, now!" cried King, as the door-bell was heard. "But I don't see any carriage," he added, looking from the window. In a moment Sarah appeared with a telegram for Mrs. Maynard.

"They are delayed," said that lady, prophetically, "and won't arrive till the next train." But this she said while she was opening the

envelope. As she read the message, her face fell, and she exclaimed, "Oh, they're not coming at all."

"Not coming?" said Mr. Maynard, taking the yellow paper.

"No; Mrs. Crawford's sister is ill, and she can't leave her. Oh, I'm so disappointed!"

"It is too bad, my dear; I'm very sorry for you. I wish they could have let you know sooner."

"Yes, I wish so, too. Then we could have gone out to Grandma Sherwood's for the day."

"Is it too late for that?" asked Marjorie, eagerly. "Can't we get ready, and fly off in a hurry?"

"*You* could," said her father, smiling. "And probably we all could. But Grandma Sherwood couldn't get ready for six starving savages in such short order. Moreover, I fancy Mother has a larder full of good things here that must be eaten by somebody. What shall we do, Helen?"

"I don't know, Ed. I'll leave it to you. Plan anything you like."

"Then I'll leave it to the children. Speak up, friends. Who would you like to ask to eat Thanksgiving dinner with you?"

The children considered.

"It ought to be somebody from out of town," said Marjorie. "That makes it seem more like a special party."

"I'll tell you!" exclaimed Kitty. "Let's ask Molly Moss."

"Just the one!" cried Marjorie. "How'd you come to think of her, Kit? But I 'most know her people won't let her come, and there isn't time, anyway."

"There's time enough," said Mr. Maynard. "I'll call them up on the long-distance telephone now. Then if Molly can come, they can put her on the train to-morrow morning, and we'll meet her here. But I doubt if her mother will spare her on Thanksgiving Day."

However, to Mr. Maynard's surprise, Mrs. Moss consented to let Molly go, and as a neighbor was going on the early morning train, and could look after her, the matter was easily arranged.

Marjorie was in transports of glee.

"I'm truly sorry, Mother," she said, "that you can't have your own company, but, as you can't, I'm so glad Molly is coming. Now, that fixes to-morrow, but what can we do to-day to have fun?"

"I think it's King's turn," said Mr. Maynard. "Let him invite somebody to dine with us to-night."

"That's easy," said Kingdon. "I choose Dick and Gladys. We can telephone for them right away."

"They don't seem much like company," said Marjorie, "but I'd rather have them than anybody else I know of."

"Then it's all right," said Mrs. Maynard, "and, as they're not formal company, you'd better all change those partified clothes for something you can romp about in."

"Yes, let's do that," said Kitty. "I can't have fun in dress-up things."

And so it was an informal lot of children who gathered about the dinner-table, instead of the guests who had been expected.

But Mr. Maynard exerted himself quite as much to be entertaining as if he had had grown-up companions, and the party was a merry one indeed.

After dinner the young people were sent to the playroom, as the elders were expecting callers.

"Tell me about Molly Moss," said Gladys to Marjorie. "What sort of a girl is she?"

"Crazy," said Marjorie, promptly. "You never knew anybody, Glad, who could get up such plays and games as she does. And she gets into terrible mischief, too. She's going to stay several days, and we'll have lots of fun while she's here. At Grandma's last summer, we played together nearly all the time. You'll like her, I know. And she'll like *you*, of course. We'll all have fun together."

Gladys was somewhat reassured, but she had a touch of jealousy in her nature, and, as she was really Marjorie's most intimate friend, she resented a little bit the coming of this stranger.

"She sounds fine," was Dick's comment, as he heard about Molly. "We'll give her the time of her life. Can she skate, Mops?"

"Oh, I guess so. I only knew her last summer, but I'm sure she can do anything."

When Molly arrived the next morning, she flew into the house like a small and well-wrapped-up cyclone. She threw her muff in one direction, and her gloves in another, and made a mad dash for Marjorie.

Then, remembering her manners, she spoke po-[lite]ly to Mrs. Maynard.

"How do you do?" she said; "it was very kind of you to invite me here, and I hope you won't make me any trouble. There! Mother told me to say that, and I've been studying it all the way, for fear I'd forget it."

Mrs. Maynard smiled, for Molly was entirely unaware of the mistake she had made in her mother's message, and the other children had not noticed it, either.

"We're glad to have you with us, my dear," Mrs. Maynard replied; "and I hope you'll enjoy yourself and have a real good time."

"Yes'm," said Molly, "I always do."

Then the children ran away to play out-of-doors until dinner-time.

"It's so queer to be here," said Molly, who had never before been away from home alone.

"It's queer to have you, but it's nice," said Marjorie. "Which do you like best, summer or winter?"

"Both!" declared Molly. "Whichever one it is, I like that one; don't you?"

"Yes, I s'pose so. But I like winter best. There's so much to do. Why, Molly, I'm busy every minute. Of course, school takes most of the

time, so I have to crowd all the fun into the afternoons and Saturdays."

"Oh, is this your hill?" exclaimed Molly, as they reached their favorite coasting-ground. "What a little one! Why, the hills at home are twice as long as this."

"I know it," said Mopsy, apologetically; "but this is the longest one here. Won't it do?"

"Oh, yes," said Molly, who did not mean to be unpleasantly critical, but who was merely surprised. "But you have to be going up and down all the time."

"We do," agreed King. "But it's fun. And, anyway, you have to go up and down all the time if it's a longer hill, don't you?"

"So you do," admitted Molly, "but it seems different."

However, after a few journeys up and down, she declared the hill was a first-rate coaster, and she liked it better than a long one, because it was easier to walk up.

They all liked Molly. Gladys concluded she was a welcome addition to their crowd, and both Kingdon and Dick thought her a jolly girl.

She was daring,—sometimes a little too much

so,—but she was good-natured, and very kind and pleasant.

"Don't you ever hitch on?" she asked, as they all trudged up hill.

"What's that mean?" asked Gladys.

"Why, hitch on behind sleighs. Or big wagon-sleds."

"With horses?"

"Yes, of course. It's lots of fun. Come on, let's try it."

Out to the road they went, and waited for a passing sleigh. Soon Mr. Abercrombie's turnout came by.

This gentleman was one of the richest men in Rockwell, and very dignified and exclusive. Indeed, he was a bit surly, and not very well liked by his fellow townsmen. But he had a fine sleigh and a magnificent pair of horses, which were driven by a coachman in a brave livery and fur cape.

"Please give us a hitch," called out Molly, as the glittering equipage drew near.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Mr. Abercrombie, as he looked at the child.

Molly was always elf-like in appearance, but the wind had reddened her cheeks, and blown wisps

of her straight black hair about her face, until she looked crazier than ever.

The big sleigh had stopped, and Mr. Abercrombie glared at the group of children.

"What did you say?" he demanded, and Molly repeated her request.

Marjorie was a little shocked at the performance, but she thought loyalty to her guest required that she should stand by her, so she stepped to Molly's side and took hold of her hand.

The two surprised boys were about to enter a protest, when Mr. Abercrombie smiled a little grimly, and said:

"Yes, indeed. That's what I'm out for. Martin, fasten these sleds on behind somehow."

The obedient footman left his place, and, though the order must have been an unusual one, he showed no sign of surprise.

"Yes, sir," he said, touching his hat. "Beg pardon, sir, but what shall I fasten them to, sir?"

"I said fasten them to this sleigh! If there isn't any way to do it, invent one. Fasten one sled, and then that can hold the next one, all the way along. Blockhead!"

"Yes, sir; very good, sir." And, touching his

hat again, the unperturbed footman went to work. How he did it, they never knew, for the sleigh had not been constructed for the purpose of "giving a hitch" to children's sleds, but somehow the ingenious Martin attached a sled securely to the back of the big sleigh. Molly took her seat thereon, and then another sled was easily fastened to the back of hers. And so on, until all were arranged.

Then the footman calmly returned to his own place, the coachman touched up the horses, the bells jingled gaily, and they were off!

Such a ride as they had! It was ever so much more fun than riding in the sleigh, and though the boys, who were at the end of the line of sleds, fell off occasionally, they floundered on again, and were all right until they turned another sharp corner.

"Thank you, *very* much, mister," said Molly, heartily, as they neared the Maynard home; "we're going to leave you now."

Again the sleigh stopped, the dignified footman came and released the sleds, and, after a chorus of thanks from the merry children, Mr. Abercrombie drove away in his solitary splendor.

"You beat the Dutch, Molly!" cried King. "I never should have dreamed of asking Lord Abercrombie, as people call him, to give us a ride."

"I think he liked it as well as we did," said Molly.

"I think so, too," said Marjorie, "and I hope some day he'll take us again."

CHAPTER XVIII

THANKSGIVING DAY

The Thanksgiving Dinner was a jollification.

The Maynard children were always a merry crowd, but the added element of Molly's gaiety gave a new zest to the fun.

The pretty table decorations, planned for the expected guests, were modified better to suit the children's tastes, and when dinner was announced and they all went out to the dining-room, a general shout of applause was raised.

In the middle of the table was a large "horn of plenty," fashioned of gilded pasteboard. From its capacious mouth were tumbling oranges, apples, bananas, grapes, nuts, figs, and raisins. The horn itself was beautifully decorated, and seemed to be suspended from the chandelier above by red ribbons.

Also, red ribbons, starting from the horn itself,

led to each person's plate, and at the end of each ribbon was a name-card.

Gleefully the children took their places, and laughed merrily at the funny little souvenirs that stood at their plates.

Kingdon had a jolly pig, made of a lemon, with wooden toothpicks stuck in for legs, a curly tail made of a bit of celery, and two black-headed pins for eyes.

Marjorie had a horse made of a carrot, which looked like a very frisky steed, indeed.

"It should have been made of a horse-radish," said Mr. Maynard, who was the originator of these toys, "but I feared that would make you weep instead of laugh."

Molly had a gay-looking figure, whose head was a fig, his body a potato, and his legs and arms bunches of raisins. He wore a red fez with a feather in it, and a red tunic tied with gold braid.

Kitty had a nut doll, whose head was a hazelnut, and its body an English walnut. Its feet and hands were peanuts, stuck on the ends of matches.

Rosy Posy had a card on which were several white mice. These were made of blanched almonds,

fastened to the card by stitches of thread, which looked like tiny legs and tails.

Mrs. Maynard found at her place a tiny figure of a dancing girl. The head was a small white grape, and the body and ruffled skirts were merely a large carnation turned upside down.

And Mr. Maynard's own souvenir was a funny old fat man, whose body was an apple, and his head a hickory nut.

Molly had never seen such toys before, and she was enraptured with them, declaring she should learn to make them for her friends at home.

"You can do it, if you try," said Marjorie, sagely; "but they aren't easy to make. Father does them so beautifully, because he is patient and careful. But you and I, Molly, are too slap-dash. We'd never take pains to make them so neatly."

"Yes, I would," declared Molly, positively; "because I see how nice they look when they're done well! I don't want any broken-legged pigs, or tumble-to-pieces dolls."

"That's the way to talk," said Mr. Maynard, approvingly; "I foresee, Molly, we shall be great

friends, and I'll teach you the noble art of what I call 'pantry sculpture.'"

After the turkey and other substantial dishes had been disposed of, dessert was brought, and, to the great delight of the children, it comprised many and various confections.

First, there was placed at each plate a dear little mince pie, hot, and covered with a drift of powdered sugar. In the middle of each pie stood a lighted candle.

"Oh, ho, it's somebody's birthday!" cried King, as he saw the candles.

"Somebody's only one year old, then," said Molly.

"These aren't birthday candles exactly," said Mr. Maynard. "They're just candles to keep the pies hot. But as I want to eat my pie, I'll just eat the candle first, and get it out of the way."

So saying, he calmly blew out the flame, and in a moment had eaten the candle, wick and all!

"Oh, Father!" cried Marjorie. "How could you do that? Do you like wax candles?"

"These candles aren't exactly wax," said her

father, "and I must say mine tasted very good."

Molly's bright black eyes snapped.

"If Mr. Maynard can eat candles, so can I!" she declared, and, blowing out the flame, she bit off the end of her own candle.

"It *is* good," she said, as she munched it. "I like candles, too."

So then they all tried eating candles. Marjorie tasted hers carefully, and then took a larger bite.

"Why, it's apple!" she cried. And so it was. The "candles" had been cut with an apple-corer, and the "wicks" were bits of almond cut the right shape and stuck in the top of the candle. The oil in the nut causes it to burn for a few moments, and the whole affair looks just like a real candle.

The mince pies were followed by ice-cream, and that by fruits and candies, and then the feast was over, but every one carried away the jolly little souvenirs to keep as mementoes of the occasion. Skating was the order of the afternoon.

Mr. Maynard went with the older children, while Mrs. Maynard and Rosy Posy amused themselves at home.

Kitty couldn't skate very well, but all the others were fairly good skaters, and soon they were gliding over the ice, while Mr. Maynard pushed Kitty in a sliding chair. She thought she had the most fun of all, but the others preferred their own feet to a chair, and skated tirelessly around the lake, not at all dismayed by somewhat frequent upsets and tumbledowns.

The Fultons joined them, and several others, and Molly soon made acquaintance with many of the Maynards' friends.

Molly was such a daring child that Mr. Maynard carefully warned her about going near the thin places in the ice, and she promised to avoid them. But it was with some uneasiness he watched the young skaters, when, at Molly's suggestion, they played "Snap the Whip."

This meant to join hands in a long row, and, after skating rapidly, the one at the end stood still and swung the others round like the lash of a whip. No trouble was likely to occur if they held hands firmly. But to separate meant that the end ones would be whirled away, and might get a bad fall.

As the boys were strong and sturdy, and the

girls had promised to hold on tightly and carefully, Mr. Maynard let them play this game, though he had always thought it a dangerous sport.

"Just once more," begged Marjorie, when at last he told them he would rather they'd play something else—and permission was given for one more "Snap the Whip," on condition that it should be the last. And it was.

Marjorie was on one end, and Molly was next to her.

Kingdon was at the other end, and, after a few vigorous strokes, he pulled the line about so suddenly that Molly, who was not expecting it so soon, was jerked away from her next neighbor.

She and Marjorie were flung with force across the ice, but they were quite alert, kept their balance perfectly, and would have been skating back again in a minute, but they chanced upon a thin place in the ice, and it broke through, and in they went!

Many of the children screamed, but Molly's voice rang out clear above the rest:

"Don't yell so! We're all right, only it's awful cold. Just get us out as quick as you can."

Relieved to learn that they hadn't gone under the water, Mr. Maynard soon found a fence-rail, and, with the boys' assistance, it was not long before the dripping girls were once more outside the lake, instead of inside.

"No harm done, if you obey my orders," said Mr. Maynard, cheerily, for the two white faces looked more scared than they had at first. He hurriedly took off their skates, and then said, "Now, run for home, just as fast as you can go, and the one who gets there first shall have a prize."

A little bewildered by this order, but quite ready to obey, Marjorie started at once and fairly flew over the hard ground. Molly followed, and in a moment had overtaken and passed Midget. But spurred by this, Midget ran faster, and at last, quite out of breath, and also quite warm, they reached the Maynard house at almost exactly the same time.

Exhausted, they tumbled in at the door, and Mrs. Maynard met them in the hall.

"What *is* the matter?" she exclaimed. "Where *have* you been?"

"Skating," said Marjorie, hurriedly, "and we

fell in, and Father said to run home quick and get dry shoes and things and he'd give us a prize."

"A prize!" said Mrs. Maynard, laughing. "You deserve a prize, indeed! A hot bath is what you'll get, and a drink of hot milk."

"All right," said Mopsy, cheerfully, "I don't mind; and, while we're about it, we may as well dress for afternoon."

The programme was carried out as arranged, and not very long after two spick-and-span little girls were sitting by the library fire, sipping hot milk with nutmeg in it.

"Well, upon my word!" said Mr. Maynard, coming in with King and Kitty. "I must have been mistaken! Only a short time ago I saw two children floundering in the lake, and I thought—I truly did—that they were Midge and Molly! How could I have made such a foolish mistake?"

"It was strange, indeed!" said Molly, with twinkling eyes. "Have you been skating, Mr. Maynard?"

"Part of the time. But the rest of the time I was organizing and assisting a rescue party to save those foolish children I was just telling you of."

"We were foolish!" cried Marjorie, jumping up and running to her father's arms. "I'll never do it again, Daddy, dear."

"Indeed you won't, my lady. I hereby issue a mandamus, a fiat, a writ,—and if you don't know what those things are, I'll say a plain every-day rule that is not to be broken,—that you are never to play 'Snap the Whip' again. This is a rule for Marjorie, and to you, Molly, it's a piece of advice."

"I'll take it," said Molly, so meekly that Mr. Maynard smiled, and said:

"Now that incident is closed, and we needn't mention it again. I don't believe you'll even take cold from your sudden plunge, for you both ran home like killdeer. And, by the way, who won the prize?"

"We came in almost exactly together," said Marjorie. "I was a little bit ahead at the door, but Molly was first at the gate, so isn't that even?"

"It surely is, and so you must both have prizes. I haven't them with me at the moment, but I'll engage to supply them before Molly goes home."

Thanksgiving evening was given over to games and quiet frolics.

Mrs. Maynard said the children had had enough excitement for one day, and they must play only sitting-still games, and then go to bed early. So Mr. Maynard proposed a game in which all could join, and when it was finished it would be bedtime for young people.

He produced a large spool, through which had been run a number of different colored and very narrow ribbons. Mr. Maynard held the spool, with the short ends of the ribbons hanging out toward himself, while the long ends of the ribbons, which reached across the room were apportioned one to each child.

They were allowed to select their own colors, and Marjorie took red, and Molly pink. Kitty had the blue one, and King a yellow one. Mrs. Maynard held a white one, and as Rosamond had gone to bed, no more ribbons were used, though there were others in the spool.

"Now," said Mr. Maynard, "I'll begin to tell a story, make it up as I go along, you know, and then when I stop I'll pull one of these ends. I won't look to see which one I pull, but whoever

holds the other end of the same ribbon, must take up the story and go on with it. Do you understand?"

"Yes," said all the children at once; so Mr. Maynard began:

"Once on a time there was a Princess who hadn't any name. The reason for this sad state of affairs was that no one could think of a name good enough for her. She was so beautiful and so lovely and sweet-tempered that every name seemed commonplace, and the King and Queen who were her parents offered a great reward to any one who would suggest a name that seemed appropriate. But, though they proposed every name that was known, and made up a great many more, none seemed to suit, and so the Princess grew up without any name at all. But one day her grandmother gave her a lovely little writing-desk for a birthday present. The Princess was delighted, and immediately she learned to write letters. But, strange to say, she never received any answers to the letters she sent. Days passed, and weeks passed, but nobody answered the letters. She went to the Court Wise Man, and said to him:

"'Prithee, tell me, oh, Seer, why do my friends not answer the letters I have sent them?'

"'Oh, Princess!' said the Court Wise Man, 'it is because you have no name, and, though they have already written letters to you, they know not how to address them. For how can one address a letter to a nameless person?'

"'How, indeed!' cried the Princess. 'But I will have a name. I will choose one for myself.'

So she sat down, and thought deeply for a long time, and then she jumped up, saying:

"'I have chosen a name! I shall henceforth be called——'"

Mr. Maynard made a dramatic pause, and then pulled quickly on one of the ends of ribbon that hung from his side of the spool.

CHAPTER XIX

A SPOOL OF YARNS

Mr. Maynard pulled the ribbon of which Kitty held the other end, and the little girl jumped as she felt the ribbon move in her hand. But Kitty was usually ready for an emergency.

"Violetta Evangeline," she said. "The Princess thought that was the most beautiful name in the world, and I think so, too. Well, then, her father, the King, had the news sent all through the kingdom that his daughter was named at last, and then everybody sent her letters. She had bags and bags full of mail every day, and they had to put on an extra postman. And she had valentines in the mail, and catalogues, and birthday presents, and samples of dresses, and seeds for flowers, and,—and magazines, and,—and,—and one day a little live kitten came to her in the mail, and she was *so* pleased. So she named the kitten Toodle-Doo, and wherever she went she

took the kitten with her. And one day she went off on a long journey, and of course Toodle-Doo went with her. And as they went along,—and went along——"

Just here Mr. Maynard pulled another ribbon, and Molly gave a startled jump.

So Kitty stopped, and Molly took up the story:

"They went along," said she, dropping her voice to a tragic whisper, "on a dark and lonely road. And a great pirate jumped out at them, and cried, 'What, ho! The password?' And Violetta Evangeline didn't know the password, but she guessed at it, and she guessed, 'Crackers and Cheese,' and, as it happened, she guessed just right, and they let her go through."

"Through what?" asked King, greatly interested.

"Oh! I don't know," returned Molly, carelessly; "through the gate, I s'pose, into the enchanted garden. So she went in, and everything enchanted happened all at once. She was turned into a fairy, and the kitten was turned into a canary bird, and he roosted on the fairy's shoulder, and then he began to sing. And then the enchantment turned him into a music-box, and so Violetta

Evangeline didn't have any kitten or any bird or anybody to play with. But just then the Fairy Prince came along, and he said he'd play with her. And he said she could play with his toys. So she went to see them, and they were all made of gold and jewels. His tops were of gold, and his kites were of gold all set with rubies and diamonds."

"Huh," said King, "they couldn't fly!"

"These kites could," said Molly, quite undisturbed, "because they were enchanted kites, and that made the diamonds as light as feathers."

But just then Marjorie's ribbon twitched. She had been waiting for it, and she picked up the story where Molly left off.

"The kites were so *very* light," said Midge, "that one of them flew away entirely. And as Violetta Angeline was hanging on to its string, she was carried along with it, and in a jiffy she was over the wall and outside of the enchanted garden, so then she wasn't enchanted any more, but she was just a Princess again. So she walked forth, and sought adventures. And her first adventure was with a dragon. He was an awful big dragon, and flames of fire came out of his mouth and his ears and his toes. But the Princess wasn't

afraid of him, and as there was a big hydrant near by, she turned it on him and put the flames out. Then he wailed, and wept, and he said: 'Oh, Violetta Angelina, I have a woe! Oh, oh, I have a woe!' And as she was a kind Princess, she said, 'Tell me what your woe is, and perhaps I can help you.' So the Dragon said——"

Here Kingdon's ribbon pulled, and, though taken somewhat unawares, the boy tried to jump right into the story-telling, and he said:

"'Yes, yes, my dear,' said the Dragon, 'I have a woe, and it's this: everybody laughs at me because I cannot climb a tree!' 'Is that all?' asked the Princess, in surprise; 'why, I will teach you to climb a tree.' 'Oh, if you only would!' exclaimed the Dragon. So the Princess taught him to climb a tree, and they all lived happy ever after."

King brought his story to an abrupt close, because his mother had begun to look at the clock, and to intimate by sundry nods and gestures that it was bedtime.

"But Mother hasn't told any of the story yet," said Kitty, who was herself so sleepy she could scarcely listen even to the tale of her own Violetta Evangeline.

"Mother's story must wait till some other time," said Mrs. Maynard. "This is the time for everybody of fourteen years or less to skip-hop up to bed."

So away trooped the children, glad to have learned a new game, and carefully putting away for future use the spool with the ribbons through it.

"But the ribbons don't really make any difference," said Molly, as they went upstairs. "You could just as well *say* whose turn comes next."

"But it's so much prettier," argued Marjorie; "and it makes it seem so much more like a game."

"What's the name of the game?"

"I don't know; let's make up one."

"All right; Spool Stories,—no, Spool Yarn."

"A Spool of Yarns!" cried Marjorie, clapping her hands. "That's the very thing!"

And so "A Spool of Yarns" became one of their favorite games, and was often played in the evenings or on stormy days.

The rest of Molly's visit passed all too quickly, and Marjorie was sad indeed the day her friend returned home.

But Mrs. Maynard bore the blow bravely.

"She's a dear little girl," she said, after Molly had gone; "but she *is* a lively one. In fact, she's a regular Maynard, and four young Maynards are just about all I can stand in the house permanently."

"Weren't we good, Mother?" asked Marjorie, anxiously.

"Yes, dear, you were good enough. Really, you didn't get into much mischief; but I suppose you've no idea how much noise you made."

"No'm, I haven't," said Marjorie. "And now I guess I'll go skating."

"Very well, Midge; but remember what Father told you about 'Snap the Whip.'"

"Oh, yes, indeed, Mother. I can never forget that, 'cause I have my prize, you know."

True to his word to give them both prizes, Mr. Maynard had brought the girls each a dainty silver bangle, from which hung a tiny pair of skates. This, he said, was to remind them of the dangerous game, and of their really narrow escape on Thanksgiving Day.

Later that afternoon Marjorie came home from her skating in a great state of excitement.

"Oh, Mother," she said; "Miss Merington has

asked me to be at her table at the Bazaar! Won't that be lovely?"

"Miss Merington! What does she want of a little girl like you?"

"Oh, she wants me to help her! Just afternoons, you know; not evenings. She's going to have two or three girls to help her. Miss Frost asked Gladys to be with her. You see, it's this way. Haven't you heard about the Alphabet of Booths?"

"No; what does that mean?"

"Well, I'll tell you. You see, the whole big Bazaar is going to be divided up into twenty-six booths. Each one is a letter—A, B, C, you know. Then everybody who takes charge of the booth begins with that letter, and sells those things."

"What things?"

"Why, Mother, like this. The A booth is in charge of Mrs. Andrews, and she sells apples and andirons, and,—and anything that begins with A."

"Then I should think she could sell 'anything,'" said Mrs. Maynard, laughing.

"Oh, Mother, that's lovely and witty. I'll tell Mrs. Andrews that. Well, and then Mrs.

Burns has the B booth, and she sells beads and books and baskets and whatever begins with B."

"Oh, yes, I understand. And it's very clever. And so Miss Merington invited you to help her?"

"Yes, and Miss Frost invited Gladys, because Fulton begins with F. But, Mother, I can't think of a thing to sell that begins with M. Something that I can make, I mean. I can only think of melons and mantelpieces."

"How about mats?"

"Oh, yes, I can make mats. Crochet them, you mean? Will you show me how?"

"Yes, and mops, too; you can make mops, or buy them, either. I suppose they expect you to contribute some articles to be sold. I'll make some for you, too. I'll make you a lovely big, soft melon cushion, a head rest, you know. And, oh, Mopsy! I'll give you some mixed pickles, some of those good ones that Ellen puts up. They'll sell well, I know."

"Oh, goody, Mother; I'll have a lot of things to give them, won't I? And Miss Merington will be so pleased. She's a lovely lady."

"Yes, she's a charming girl, and I'm glad to

have you help her. Perhaps Father can think up some things for you that begin with M."

This was a good suggestion, and that very evening Midget put the question:

"Father, what begins with M that you could sell?"

"Why, Mopsy Midget Maynard, I could sell you, but I doubt if I could get a big enough price. You're a pretty valuable piece of property."

"Yes, but don't joke, Daddy. I mean really, in earnest, for the Bazaar, you know."

"Oh, yes, I've heard about that wonderful Bazaar. Well, let me see. Are you allowed to have any sort of wares if they begin with the right letter?"

"Yes, I think so. Mother thought of mats and mops."

"That's a good start. How are you to get these things? Do you donate them all to the Bazaar?"

"Yes; or Miss Merington said we could ask people to give us things, but I don't like to do that."

"No; not from strangers, of course. But I'm sure Mr. Gordon will be glad to give you some

toys or notions out of his store. He's such an old friend of mine, I wouldn't mind your asking him. And then I think Uncle Steve would send you a few trinkets, or Grandma Sherwood might. But most of your contributions I think we'll get up here at home. Now, let's be methodical, because that begins with M, and first we'll make some lists."

Marjorie was greatly interested, and flew for a pad and pencil, and then waited for her father to make his lists.

"I declare, Midget," he said, at last, "this is harder than I thought. I can't think of a thing but mahogany bureaus and marble mantles."

"How about marbles, Father? I mean the kind you play marbles with."

"That's good, Midge. Mr. Gordon will give you those. I don't want you to ask any one else, but Tom Gordon told me he would give a lot of things to the Bazaar, and he said for you to go down there and pick out what you want."

"Oh, that will be lovely! Now, let's think what else he has."

"Yes, that's the way to get at it. In a shop like his, with all sorts of stationery and toys and

knick-knacks, there ought to be lots of M's. Well, doubtless he'll give you some music,—sheet-music, you know; and perhaps some magazines. Oh, and memorandum-books. You can always sell those to business men. Then he has maps, too; pocket-maps, or even larger ones. And I think that's all you ought to expect from him."

"Yes, that's enough. Now, what can I make myself?"

"I daresay Mother finished the list when she said mats and mops. I don't know of anything else, unless it's mantillas."

"What are they?"

"Don't you know? Well, it is an old-fashioned word. They're ladies' cloaks, mantles, you know."

"Oh, Father, I could make some for dolls!"

"Yes, that's good; if you can sew well enough."

"Mother will help me with the hard parts. But, really, they will be lovely. All the little girls will buy them. Now, can't I make something else?"

"Why, yes; make candy! Marshmallows,—I'll teach you how; you know I'm a famous candy-maker. But I don't know any other sort,—unless we say mint-drops. Would that do?"

"Oh, yes. And I can make mottoes. Any kind of candy, you know, done up in motto-papers."

"That's a fine idea! We'll all make a lot of home-made candy, and help you wrap it the night before the show. Then your nice, fresh mottoes will go off like hot cakes."

"Yes, indeed. And Ellen is going to give me some jars of her good mixed pickles."

"Oh, Ellen can help you a lot. Ask her to make you some mince pies and marmalade, and macaroons."

"Goody! Goody! I can have a regular food sale, all of M's! Why, it's a lovely letter, after all. I'm glad it's mine."

"How are they going to manage the Q and X and Z?"

"I think they're going to leave out X and Z. But Q is to be a table full of queer things. Indian curiosities, and such things. Miss Merington told me about it. Gladys is going to be with Miss Frost. She's going to make fudge, and paper fairies. And her father is going to give her a lot of fans,—Japanese ones,—and Dick is going to cut her out some fretwork things with his scroll-saw."

"Well, I think the ladies will have very helpful little assistants. I'll bring you a budget of things from the city, and we'll all have a bee to make candy for you."

The bee was great fun. The day before the Bazaar, Mr. Maynard brought home all sorts of goodies to make the candies with. He came home early that they might begin in the afternoon.

All the Maynard family went to work, and Ellen and Sarah helped some, too.

They made all sorts of candies that could be formed with the right shape and size for mottoes.

Rosy Posy, who loved to cut paper, snipped away at the sheets of printed verses, and really helped by cutting the couplets apart, all ready to be tucked into the papers with the candies.

The result of their labors was a big box of lovely-looking "mottoes," all neatly twisted into fringed or scalloped papers of bright colors.

King proposed that Midget should have a restaurant at the Bazaar, and serve macaroni, and mackerel, muskmelons, and milk.

But Mr. Maynard said he feared that would necessitate medicine and medical attendance.

CHAPTER XX

THE CHARITY BAZAAR

The Bazaar opened Thursday afternoon, and was to continue the rest of the week. As it was for a public charity, the whole town was interested, and the Town Hall, where the Bazaar was held, was gaily decorated for the occasion.

Marjorie was allowed to stay home from school, and in the morning she went over to the hall to take her contributions and to help Miss Merington arrange the booth.

Uncle Steve had responded nobly to Marjorie's letter asking him to send her some M things. A box came to her by express, and in it were some Indian beaded moccasins that were unique and beautiful. Then there were several pocket mirrors and hand mirrors; half a dozen mousetraps; a package of matches; some funny masks, and a plaster cast of "Mercury."

There was also a large wicker thing shaped like

the arc of a circle. At first Marjorie didn't know the name of this, though she had seen them used to protect carriage wheels.

"Why, it's a mudguard!" cried Mr. Maynard. "How clever of old Steve!"

Also in the box were some mufflers, which Grandma Sherwood had made by neatly hemming large squares of silk.

Mr. Maynard had brought Marjorie some inexpensive pieces of jewelry, which, he told her, were Florentine mosaics, and so, with all her M's, the little girl had a fine lot of wares to contribute.

James took them over to the hall for her, and Miss Merington was greatly pleased.

"You're a worth-while assistant," said the young lady, as she bustled about, arranging her pretty booth.

True to the spirit of the plan, Miss Merington had made her booth of mauve-colored tissue-paper, and decorated it with morning-glories, also made of paper, of delicate violet shades.

It was one of the prettiest booths in the room, and Marjorie was glad she belonged to it.

"Now, Moppet," said Miss Merington, "what

are you going to wear this afternoon? I have a beautiful mauve costume, but I suppose you haven't. And as I don't want you to be a jarring note, I'm going to ask you not to wear any red or blue. Can't you wear all white?"

"My frock is white, Miss Merington," said Marjorie; and then she added, laughing, "and it's muslin, so I suppose that's all right. And Mother bought me a mauve sash and hair-ribbon and silk stockings, all to match. And I've white slippers. Will that do?"

"Do! I should think it would. You'll be sweet in mauve and white. Now, I'll tell you your duties. You must just look pleasant and smiling, so that people will want to come to our booth to buy things. Then when they come, you may tell them the prices of things if they ask you, but don't ask them to buy. I hate people at fairs who insist on everybody's buying their goods. Don't you?"

Marjorie felt quite important at being consulted on this matter, and she hastened to agree with Miss Merington.

"Yes," she said. "But you won't have to ask the people to buy; I think they'll want to come

here, because this is the prettiest booth in the whole room."

"I'm glad you think so. But Miss Frost's booth is lovely. All made of cotton-wool snow, and tinsel ice."

"Oh, it's beautiful. My friend Gladys Fulton belongs there, and Daisy Ferris, too. I thought you were going to have more assistants, Miss Merington. Am I the only one?"

"Yes; to tell you the truth, I didn't know of any other nice little girl whose name began with M. You don't mind, do you, dear?"

"Oh, no, indeed! I'm glad to be here alone with you. And I'll do all I can to help."

"I'm sure you will. But now there's nothing more for you to do this morning, so skip along home and get a good rest; then be back here promptly at three o'clock this afternoon with all your mauve millinery on."

"I don't wear a hat, Miss Merington!" exclaimed Midge, in dismay.

"Of course not. I said millinery, meaning your ribbons and finery. I used the word because it begins with M. Do you know, Marjorie, I fairly *think* in words beginning with M!"

"Oh, is that it?" said Marjorie, laughing. "Well, good-morning Mademoiselle Merington!"

"You're a clever little thing," said Miss Merington; "and now run along home to Mother Maynard's mansion."

Marjorie laughed at this sally, and started for home. But at Miss Frost's booth she found Gladys, and the two walked around the hall, looking at the other booths. They were very interesting, for each lady in charge had endeavored to get all the novel ideas possible for which her special initial could be used.

X, Y, and Z had been declared impossible, but some clever girls had concluded it would be a pity to omit them, and said that they would combine the three in one booth. For X, which, they said, always represented "an unknown quantity," they had prepared some express packages. These contained merchandise of some sort, and had been sent through the express office, in order to give the proper appearance of expressed parcels. They were for sale at a price that was fair for their contents, and people were asked to buy them unopened, thus purchasing "an unknown quantity." Then there were yeast-cakes for sale; and toy

yachts, marked "For Sail"; and yellow things of any kind; and zephyr garments, such as shawls and sacques and slippers.

This booth was very attractive, and was draped with yellow cheesecloth, with black X's and Y's and Z's all over it.

In order to make a variety, the R booth was a restaurant, the L booth served lemonade, and the C booth, candy and cakes.

"Isn't it fun?" said Marjorie to Gladys, as at last they started homeward. "What are you going to wear, Glad? I don't know of any color that begins with F."

"No," said Gladys. "Miss Frost says there's nothing but fawn-color, and that won't do. So we're all to wear white, with lots of *frills*. And we're to have feathers on our heads instead of ribbon bows, and we're to carry feather fans. I wish I was in your booth, Midget."

"Yes, I wish so, too; but of course we couldn't be in the same. But Father's coming at six to take us all to supper in the restaurant booth. Perhaps we can get together then."

"Yes, I hope we can. I'll ask Mother about it."

The girls parted at Gladys's gate, and Marjorie went on home to luncheon.

"It's perfectly lovely, Mother!" she cried, as she entered the house. "I never saw such a beautiful fair."

"That's good, girlie; and now you must eat your luncheon and then lie down for a little rest before you go this afternoon."

"Oh, Mother Maynard! Why, I'm not a bit tired. You must think I'm an old lady."

Mrs. Maynard smiled at the bright face and dancing eyes, which certainly showed no trace of weariness.

But after luncheon she said: "Now, Midget, you must go to your room, and lie down for half an hour. Close your eyes, and rest even if you do not sleep."

Midget drew a long sigh, and walked slowly off to obey. She lay down on her own little white bed, but though she managed to close her eyes for nearly half a minute, they then flew wide open.

"Mother!" she called out. "I can't keep my eyes shut, unless I pin them. Shall I do that?"

"Don't be foolish, Marjorie," called back Mrs. Maynard, from her own room. "Go to sleep."

"But, Mother, I can't go to sleep. I'm as wide-awake as a—a weasel. Mother, what time are you going to the fair?"

"At four o'clock. Now, be quiet, Marjorie, and don't ask any more questions."

"No'm. But, Mother, mayn't I get up now? I've been here nearly six or seven hours."

"It isn't six or seven minutes, yet. You must stay there half an hour, so you may as well make your mind up to it."

"Yes'm; I've made up my mind. But I think this clock has stopped. It hasn't moved but a teenty, taunty speck in all these hours. What time is it by your clock, Mother?"

"Marjorie! You'll drive me distracted! Will you be still?"

"Yes'm, if you'll let me come in your room. May I, Mother? I'll just lie still on your couch, and I won't speak. I'll just look at you. You know you're so pretty, Mother."

Mrs. Maynard stifled a laugh.

"Come on, then," she called. "I simply can't yell like this any longer."

"I should think not," said Marjorie, as she

appeared in her mother's doorway. "My throat's exhausted, too."

"Now, remember," said Mrs. Maynard, "you said you'd be quiet in here. Lie down on the couch, and put the afghan over you, and go to sleep."

"I'll lie down on the couch,—so," said Marjorie, suiting the action to the word; "and I'll put the afghan over me,—so; but I can't go to sleep—because I can't."

"Well, shut your eyes, and try to go to sleep; and, at any rate, stop talking."

"Yes'm; I'll try." Marjorie squeezed her eyes tightly shut, and in a moment she began to talk in a droning voice. "I'm asleep now, Mother, thank you. I'm having a lovely nap. I'm just talking in my sleep, you know. Nobody can help that, can they?"

"No; but they can't expect to be answered. So, talk in your sleep if you choose, but keep your eyes shut."

"Oh, dear, that's the hardest part! Oh, Mother, I've such a good idea! Mayn't I begin to dress while I'm asleep? Just put on my slippers and stockings, you know. It would be such a help

toward dressing to have that done. May I,— Mother? Mother, may I?"

"Marjorie, you are incorrigible! Get up, do, and go for your bath, now. And if you're ready too early, you'll have to sit still and not move until it's time to go."

"Oh, Mother, what a dear, sweet mother you are!"

With a bound, Marjorie was off of the couch and tumbling into her mother's arms.

Mrs. Maynard well understood the impatient young nature, and said no more about a nap.

But at last the time came for Marjorie to start, and very sweet and dainty she looked in her mauve and white costume. She had never worn that color before, as it isn't usually considered appropriate for little girls, but it proved becoming, and her dancing eyes and rosy cheeks brightened up an effect otherwise too demure for a twelve-year-old child.

Gladys was waiting at her own gate, and off they went to the hall.

Of course, the customers hadn't yet arrived, but soon after Marjorie had taken her place inside the booth, the people began to flock to the fair.

Miss Merington looked lovely in a violet crêpe-de-chine gown, which just suited her exquisite complexion and golden hair.

She greeted Marjorie as a companion and fellow-worker, and Midge resolved to do her best to please the lovely lady. Somehow there seemed to be a great deal to do. As the afternoon wore on the M booth had a great many customers, and Miss Merington was kept so busy that Marjorie had to be on the alert to assist her. She made change; she answered the customers' questions; and sometimes she had to go to the department of supplies for wrapping paper, string, and such things. She was very happy, for Marjorie dearly loved a bustle of excitement, and the Bazaar was a gay place.

After a time old Mr. Abercrombie came to the M booth. Marjorie hadn't forgotten the day they rode behind his sleigh, and she wondered if he would buy anything from her.

He looked at her quizzically through his big glasses, and said:

"Well, well, little girl, and what have you for sale? Old gentlemen like myself are fond of sweet things, you know. Have you any sweet cakes?"

"Yes, sir," said Marjorie, and as Miss Merington was occupied with other customers she felt justified in trying to make a sale herself.

"Yes, sir; we have these very nice cocoanut macaroons."

"Ah, yes; and how do you know they're nice? You must never make a statement unless you're sure."

"Oh, but I am sure," said Marjorie, very earnestly. "Ellen, our cook, made them, and she's a very superior cook. I know she is, because my mother says so. And, besides, I know these are good because I've had some of them myself."

"You've proved your case," said the old gentleman. "But now I'll catch you! I'll buy your whole stock of macaroons if——"

"If what, sir?" said Marjorie, breathlessly, for his suggestion meant a large sale, indeed.

"If you can spell macaroons," was the unexpected reply.

"Oh!" Marjorie gave a little gasp of dismay, for she had never had the word in her spelling lessons, and she didn't remember ever seeing it in print.

"May I think a minute?" she asked.

"Yes," said Mr. Abercrombie, taking out his watch; "but just a minute, no more."

This embarrassed Marjorie a little, but she was determined to win if possible, so she set her wits to work.

It was confusing, for she was uncertain whether to say double c or double r, or whether both those letters were single. Then, like a flash, came to her mind the way her father had taught her to spell *macaroni.* The words *might* not be alike, but more likely they were, so before the minute had elapsed, she said, bravely:

"M-a-c-a-r-double o-n-s."

"Good for you!" cried Mr. Abercrombie. "You're a smart little girl, and a good speller. I'll take all the macaroons you have."

Greatly elated, Marjorie referred the sale to Miss Merington, and that lady was very much pleased when Mr. Abercrombie gave her a good-sized banknote, and declined to take any change.

"For the good of the cause," he said, waiving away the proffered change.

"And now," their eccentric customer went on, "I've just a little more money to spend at this booth, for I've promised one or two other friends

to buy some of their wares. But, Miss Rosycheeks, I'll tell you what I'll do."

He looked at Marjorie so teasingly that she felt sure he was going to ask her to spell something else, and this time she feared she would fail.

"I'll do this," proceeded Mr. Abercrombie: "I'll buy anything for sale at this booth that our young friend, the paragon speller, can *not* spell!"

Marjorie's eyes sparkled. She wasn't really a "paragon speller," and she felt sure there must be something that was beyond her knowledge. But, somehow, all the things seemed to have simple names. Any one could spell mittens and muffs and mats. And though mandolin and marmalade were harder, yet she conscientiously realized that she could spell those correctly.

"I don't see anything," she said, at last, slowly and regretfully.

"Then I save my money, and you save your reputation as a speller," said Mr. Abercrombie, jocosely, as he jingled some silver in his pocket.

"Oh, wait a minute!" cried Marjorie. "There's that handsome clock! Miss Merington said it's malachite, and I haven't the least idea how to spell that!"

"Fairly caught!" said the old gentleman, chuckling at his own defeat. "I see by your honest eyes that you really don't know how to spell malachite, and it *is* a hard word. Now, listen, and I'll teach you."

Mr. Abercrombie spelled the word, and then said:

"Would you have guessed it was spelled like that?"

"No, sir," said Midge, truthfully; "I should have thought there was a 'k' in it."

"I almost wish there had been," said the gentleman, ruefully, "then I should not have to buy the most expensive article on your table. However, it will look well on my library mantel, and I shall rejoice whenever I look at it and remember that you know how to spell it."

Marjorie smiled at this idea, and the queer customer paid to Miss Merington the rather large price that was marked on the handsome clock.

"Marjorie, you're a trump!" said she, as Mr. Abercrombie walked away. "He's about the only one here rich enough to buy that clock, and I'm glad he took it. This will swell our fund finely."

When it was supper-time, the Maynards and

Fultons all went together to the restaurant in the R booth. They had a merry time, and Marjorie told the story of her "Spelling Lesson," as she called it.

"You're a born merchant, Midge," said King. "You make money by knowing how to spell—and then you make money by not knowing!"

"But such occasions don't happen often," said Mr. Maynard. "I think you'd better continue your spelling lessons for a few years yet. And now, as it's time for ice-cream, I'll try your friend's plan, Midget. If you can spell *Biscuit Tortoni*, you can have it!"

"Thank you, Father," said Marjorie, smiling; "but I'd rather have vanilla and chocolate. They're easier to spell, and just as good to eat."

After supper, the children had to go home. Marjorie looked back reluctantly at the brilliant hall, even more gay since the lights were burning, but she remembered that she could yet come two more afternoons, so she said no word of regret.

"But I do hope," she said to her mother, as she tucked her tired little girl into bed that night, "I do hope that when I'm a grown-up young

lady I'll be exactly like that lovely, sweet Miss Merington."

"I'm thankful to say that your grown-up-young-lady days are yet far off," responded her mother; "but when that time comes I'll be quite satisfied to have you the lovely, sweet Miss Maynard."

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BUNNY BROWN AND HIS SISTER SUE PLAYING CIRCUS

BUNNY BROWN AND HIS SISTER SUE AT CAMP-REST-A-WHILE

BUNNY BROWN AND HIS SISTER SUE AT AUNT LU'S CITY HOME

BUNNY BROWN AND HIS SISTER SUE IN THE BIG WOODS

BUNNY BROWN AND HIS SISTER SUE ON AN AUTO TOUR

BUNNY BROWN AND HIS SISTER SUE AND THEIR SHETLAND PONY

BUNNY BROWN AND HIS SISTER SUE GIVING A SHOW

BUNNY BROWN AND HIS SISTER SUE AT CHRISTMAS TREE COVE

BUNNY BROWN AND HIS SISTER SUE IN THE SUNNY SOUTH

BUNNY BROWN AND HIS SISTER SUE KEEPING STORE

BUNNY BROWN AND HIS SISTER SUE AND THEIR TRICK DOG

BUNNY BROWN AND HIS SISTER SUE AT A SUGAR CAMP

BUNNY BROWN AND HIS SISTER SUE ON THE ROLLING OCEAN

BUNNY BROWN AND HIS SISTER SUE ON JACK FROST ISLAND

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